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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, M. A.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. VIII.

CONTAINING

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD.

PART II. CONCLUDED.

6. THE GENERAL AND SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF APOSTATE SOULS, IN THREE LECTURES.

SERMONS:

THE GOSPEL COMMENDING ITSELF TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE. (SEVEN SERMONS.)

THE GOSPEL HID TO THOSE WHO ARE LOST. (SIX SERMONS.)

ON HOPE. (FOURTEEN SERMONS.)

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. (TEN SERMONS.)

ON REGENERATION. (THIRTEEN SERMONS.)

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THE PRINCIPLES

OF

THE ORACLES OF GOD,

IN TWO PARTS,

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

PART II.—Concluded.

CONTAINING

VI. THE GENERAL AND SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD, IN ORDER TO THE RECOVERY OF APOSTATE SOULS, IN THREE LECTURES, ON LUKE 2. 14.

LECTURE XLIII.*

LUKE II. 14.

Good will towards men.

[*The whole verse runs thus,—Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men.*]

YOU know we have been largely, and very lately, discoursing to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and the fallen state of men, with the continual descent of a corrupt nature through all the generations of men hereupon. It now follows, of course, (and according to the natural order of things as they lie,) to speak of man's recovery. And in order thereunto, in the first place, of God's kind propension towards men; which is to be considered as that which leads on the whole of any design or endeavour to that purpose; His good-will, the original, the source, the fountain, the well-head, of the glorious design which he hath set on foot for the recovery of such a lost and lapsed creature. This is more especially held forth to us in the close of this verse now read; and not more distinctly and fully any where else in Scripture. But it is in conjunction (as we shall come more particularly to take notice of by and by) with other things which we shall not overlook, though that which I design to fasten upon, is this particular only—"Good will towards men."

And if, with reference to what we have heard, we do but

* Preached, December 29, 1694.

consider the summary import of these words, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men," it might fill us with amazement and wonder. And sure it would do so, if these things were now altogether new to us, or did now come at this time to our notice and hearing. Upon what hath been so largely discoursed concerning the fall, and the degenerate state of fallen creatures; how sin and death have spread themselves through this world; how an impure and poisoned nature was continually descending, and transmitting from age to age, a nature envenomed with enmity against the Best of beings, the Sovereign rightful Lord of all: and that by this continual descent and transmitting of such a nature, (which as you have heard it did not seem meet to the divine wisdom to hinder by preternatural means,) here was, hereupon, a continual war maintained, and kept up on earth against heaven; and this war carried on in an open hostility from age to age. Upon the discovery (I say) of all this the true representation (however defective and short of the full) of the state of the case between God and man; if we did not live under the gospel, or had no notice, no intimation or hint, of any such thing before, as now comes to be laid in open view before our eyes, we should be the most transported creatures that ever God made: the children of men would generally be so. And certainly, upon the supposition already made, two things we would have expected. And two things we would little ever have expected or thought of. We would,

1. Sure, have expected that there should have been an efficacious revelation of wrath from heaven. There hath been a verbal one, and a real one in degree; we would sure have expected it to have been most efficacious and total. We would wonder that it hath not been long ago; that it hath not turned this world into flames and ashes, many a day since; and in that way put a period to the propagation of a wicked nature, and the continuation of a war and hostility against heaven, and the Lord of heaven and earth. And we would have expected,

2. That, whereas men have been accomplices with the devil, in this apostacy from God, and in the continuation of this rebellion and war against him, from age to age; (accomplices with a sort of creatures of an higher order, a great part of the heavenly host that first made a defection from God, and drew in man with them into the same apostacy;) I say, we would sure have expected that none should have been more ready executioners of the just wrath of God upon

those disingenuous, apostate, ungrateful generations and race of creatures, than those angels that retained their integrity, that left not their first estate. We would have expected that they should have been the most prepared, expedite instruments of God's vengeance upon such a generation of creatures as we were, and have been most willing, to have come upon that errand, to vindicate their rightful Sovereign Lord, from all indignities and dishonours that have been done him, by the creatures of their own order first, who had drawn into a confederation with them, a whole race of creatures of an inferior nature and order. One would think that love to God, and a zeal for his honour and interest, should so universally have inspired them, the glorious inhabitants of heaven, that no errand would have been more grateful to them, than to be sent as the quick executioners of the divine revenge upon such a wicked world as this.

And again, upon the forementioned supposition, there are two things that we should as little ever have expected, to wit:

1. That there should ever have been a thought of favour and kindness in heaven, and with the God of heaven, towards such creatures as we. That we would little have looked for, that ever the sound of such a voice should have been heard from heaven towards such an apostate degenerate race of creatures, as "peace on earth, and good-will towards men." Who would ever have looked for it? That when they were breathing nothing but war, and enmity, and hostility, against heaven, there should be a proclamation from thence, of peace towards men on earth, proceeding from (as it could proceed from nothing else but) good will. And again,

2. We would as little have expected, that the angels of God should be the messengers of such tidings to this world, whose dutiful and loyal breasts we must conceive filled with indignation against apostate creatures, that had left, and put themselves off from so kind, so benign, so gracious, and so rightful a Lord. One would little have thought, that they should have come upon such an errand; that when they would rather have been waiting for a commission to execute the just wrath of God upon this wretched world, they should be sent to proclaim *peace*, and to signify the divine good-will towards men. Though, indeed, for the same reason for which they would have been executioners of the divine revenge upon this wretched world, they would also be messengers of such glad tidings, to wit, because they were

obsequious, dutiful, and loyal; and had but one will with him, whose creatures and servants they were. His will, so far as it is notified and made known, is always perfectly complied with in heaven, as we are to desire it should be here on earth. But that was the case here; the angels are sent upon this errand first, to bespeak "glory to God in the highest," and to speak out, "peace upon earth, and good-will towards men."

And now finding ourselves outdone every way, that what we would most of all have expected, we find not; but what we would never have expected, that we find; That as to the most dismal and dreadful things that we would have looked for, we meet with a grateful disappointment: but as to such things that we would never have looked for, we meet with a most grateful surprise. When we find (I say) the matter to be so, then would our narrow minds begin to fall a wondering at somewhat else; to wit, that since wrath did not break forth upon this world, to put a sudden end and period to it; and that God having so many mighty and powerful agents to employ as instruments therein, prest and ready at his command, they were not yet employed in that work; but, on the contrary, grace breathes from heaven upon this forlorn world, and the angels of God are here made the first ministers (as it were) thereof, to publish it and make it known; we would, then, wonder why was not this much earlier? Why was it not many ages before? Why did not that gracious, kind design break forth sooner, so as to have mollified the world, to have assuaged and conquered down that enmity, and to have prevented the insolencies of wickedness, which, through a succession of many ages, for almost four thousand years together, had prevailed, and been acted on the stage of this rebellious world.

But we see that in all respects, "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts," Isaiah lv. 7. What was, with deepest and most profound wisdom, fore-laid with him in the eternal counsel of his will, it was to have a gradual, and a very gradual, discovery and revelation to this world; and not to have its fulness of accomplishment till the fulness of time set for it. Every part of that method, which he had laid with himself, every juncture in it being, by divine counsel, affixed to so many parts, and points of time, so as that every thing belonging to that glorious design must fall into that very season which was fore-determined for it, and then receive its punctual accomplishment:

according to that of the Apostle James, that sage saying of his, Acts xv. 18, " Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Not only known that they shall be, but known when every thing shall be, in what time, with what dependencies upon other things, with what references unto things that are to follow and ensue; according to that scheme and model which lay in the all-comprehending, Divine Mind; the thoughts and purposes of that mind being not hitherto unformed, but only unrevealed; hid in God, (as the expression is, Eph. i. 19;) folded up in mystery, and so concealed from ages and generations by past; in a mystery that was (as it were) inwrapt in rich glory, or in the riches of glory, as Eph. i. 22. This mysterious design, with the method of it, was not to come into view, but in the determinate season; all things being left by the supreme wisdom, in the dependence of one thing upon another, and with a particular reference to such and such seasons, that all things must have in the course and current of time.

Long it was, therefore, that this world was let sleep on in sin and darkness, unapprehensive generally, that there were any such kind thoughts in heaven towards them. Little was that thought of; and, indeed, for the most part, it was as little desired, as expected, that ever God should have given such relief or redress, to the sad, forlorn state of things in the world. It was, I say, as little desired, as it was expected or hoped; for, as the most deplorable things in this our calamitous state, such as distance from God, ignorance of him, unacquaintance with him, the presence of the sensible, and the debasement of the intellectual nature. These were not men's more real misery than they were their imagined felicity: things that they were generally very well pleased with; that which was their doom, was their choice. It was in every man's heart to say unto God, " Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; we had rather live alone apart from God." If any scattered beam of divine light shone here and there, it shone amidst the darkness which refused to comprehend it; a malignant darkness, that was naturally bent to exclude and shut it out. So that it might be truly said, The wretchedness of this world was become con-natural to it—its very element; and men did enjoy their misery: those viperous lusts, that, as so many serpents, were inwrapping and preying upon the hearts and vitals of men, they were hugged as their only delectable darlings; and all their business, every where, was to

make provision for these lusts, and to satisfy, to the utmost, what was insatiable, and could not be satisfied. So that there was not less need of divine power, to apply a remedy in such a case, than there was of wisdom to contrive, or kindness to design it.

And thereupon, as men did all this while generally (as it were) enjoy (as we said) their own misery, enjoy it to themselves; so God did all this while enjoy his own love to himself; pleased himself in this design of his, which yet, for the most part, was concealed and hid in God, as was before noted to you; and he might do so, the whole method of that design, in all the parts and junctures of it, being so surely and firmly laid, and one thing so connected with another, that it was altogether undisappointable; he being Master of the design, having it perfectly in his power, and it being impossible any thing should intervene the accomplishment of whatsoever he had determined, and purposed within himself. He enjoyed his own love, this good will of his towards men, as it was a fountain of that designed good, which they should enjoy, and which, through the several successions of some ages of time, they did, in some measure, enjoy. And that also was an ever springing fountain to himself; for nothing can satisfy God but God: an everlasting complacency, therefore, he must be supposed to take in his own benignity, in the goodness of his own will, with all the other perfections thereof.

But now, at length, in the fulness of time, this design of his breaks forth unto men too; not till time was come to its fulness, its parturient fulness, and was to be disburthened of that birth, the greatest and most glorious that ever lay in the womb of time, or was possible so to do. When the Son of God was to appear here upon this stage, and to be brought forth into this world, then it was not fit that so glorious a work as that, the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, should come forth without a previous knowledge. When he was come, it was fit it should be known what he was come for: and so Christ and a gospel, they do, in this world, commence both together: that is, now doth the Sun of Righteousness arise and shed his beams upon this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was that Sun; the gospel was the beams of it, the radiations of that Sun.

And this beaming out of the light and grace of the gospel, it was, at first, in a way as extraordinary, as the thing itself was. How extraordinary was the thing, that God should descend, be manifested in human flesh, put on man, take the

name of "Emanuel, God with us:" a God among men, how extraordinary was that thing? And the way of its discovery, it was suitably, it was correspondently, extraordinary, too: that is, by an embassy of angels, this should be first made known to the world. They were not to be the ordinary ambassadors of those glad tidings among men, but they were ambassadors extraordinary. So you find this matter is represented in this context. First, one angel appears to a company of shepherds, and tells them, (as soon as they were recovered out of their sudden affright,) that he was come to publish to them glad tidings of great joy, that should be to all people—and by and by there is a numberless host, a vast chorus, a choir of angels; a multitude of the heavenly host, who all come together upon the same errand, to publish what we have here contained in the Scripture: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

So that look upon Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; look upon the gospel as the beaming forth, the irradiation of that Sun; and you may look upon this text as the epitome, or that which hath in it the contracted beams of all that irradiation: for a sum of the gospel it is. Look into the particulars of it, and it is made up especially of these parts.

1. The final issue and effect of this great and glorious undertaking of the Son of God, in descending and coming down into this world, putting on human flesh, and being manifested therein. And that is two-fold—supreme and subordinate.

(1.) Supreme: "Glory to God in the highest." That is the thing in which this whole dispensation shall finally result; all shall terminate in the highest glory to God above; to God that inhabits those highest and most glorious regions, that is there enthroned: all shall have a final resultancy into his highest glory, who inhabiteth those highest and most glorious regions of the universe. And then,

(2.) There is the subordinate effect, or final issue, out of which that glory is to result unto God: "Peace on earth." There is a peace-making design yet on foot. It shall not be abortive. It shall have its effect, and take place. God will, upon certain terms, be reconciled unto men. Men shall be brought first or last (many of them, multitudes of them) to comply and fall in with those terms. And so where there was nothing else but war, there shall be peace:

the Prince of Peace is now arrived into this world, and it shall not be without effect: his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, a peaceful kingdom. That peace is principally, and, in the first place, to be between the offended God, and his offending creatures here below. Other peace will proportionably, and in due time, ensue.

This is the final issue and effect of this undertaking of our Lord: that is, the ultimate effect—"Glory to God in the highest;" and the subordinate effect—"peace on earth." And that is the first part that we have considerable here of the words made up of these two. And,

2. The principal, the original, the source and fountain, of that whole undertaking of our Lord, and of this two-fold effect, which is to result from it: and that is God's good will towards men. From this fountain shall spring forth both peace on earth, and glory to God; the former more immediately, and the latter ultimately: the former being subordinate to the latter, as the supreme and last end of that. And so as to this matter, the same account is here given of the whole gospel-constitution, as we find given in that Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6. "According as he hath chosen us in him, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." So that take the whole scheme of the gospel-revelation together, and it bears this inscription: It is a frame of things finally and ultimately dedicated to God, as all things must be to him, as well as from him. He that is the author is the end of all. He can do nothing but for himself. How or in what sense he doth so, to wit, doth things for his own glory, we shall have occasion to open more distinctly hereafter. But this being now the first thing that we have in view here; and which I design to touch upon as previous to that which comes last in the text, and is the main I intend to insist upon. Something, I say, I shall speak in reference to this—"Glory to God in the highest."

This you see is the final effect and issue of this mighty undertaking of a Redeemer. The Son of God descending and coming down into the world. Why, what shall be effected hereby? What shall be brought about? Why, "Glory to God in the highest." That should not fail to be effected. God would, it is true, have been glorified in the destruction of this world altogether: if it had been all laid

in ruin; if it had been turned into one heap, he would have had his glory. He might have continued that as an everlasting trophy of his power and justice; of his justice by his power.

But that was not the way chosen; and he will not lose by it, as to all revenue that it is possible can be added to the divine treasure. Nothing can be really added. Glory can be added, to wit, *reputation*, (as the word signifies,) which, therefore, must be supposed to have its place in the intelligent and apprehensive minds of men. For the word made use of here, comes from a word that signifies esteem, or to judge. There must be some that are capable of judging of what is honourable and glorious: God himself is the Supreme Judge: and, indeed, there is no competent judge besides. As it is altogether impossible that any should be his peer, or capable of making an estimate of what will be fully and adequately answerable to him in point of honour and glory. And as the matter doth relate to him, as he is to be himself the judge of honour, of what is becoming of God, what will be an honour to himself; so it is here considered,

(1.) Objectively, as the glory that could only be the thing designed by himself, to himself; to wit, the complacency that he takes in himself, which must bear some proportion to the excellency of his nature and being. And that cannot lie in the mere opinion that he hath in the minds of his creatures, (be those minds never so right, and never so comprehensive,) but the satisfaction that he receives to himself, in himself. This is an end worthy of God, and suitable unto God. Nothing can be an adequate satisfaction unto him, but what is in himself. Now there is an objective glory in himself—the glory of all his excellencies, of all his perfections: and this is the object in which he satisfies himself, and takes his own complacency there. There are, indeed, beamings forth of that excellency into the minds of creatures, but this cannot be his end; to wit, to be well thought of, or well spoken of, by his creatures: they are inconsiderable unto him. The whole creation is even as the dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket; lighter than nothing and vanity, in comparison with him.

But there is, I say, to be considered, first, an objective glory, the excellency, the becomingness of the order of things, as they lie in God, which only comes under the notion of creatures, as he is pleased to make the discovery;

and when he so doth, that shines into their enlightened minds, which was, indeed, before; to wit, the order of things, that harmony, that comely dependance and reference of one thing to another, as it lies in the counsel of God's wisdom from eternity. Here is that glory which he beholds first in himself, and so he satisfies himself on the rectitude and perfection of all that is in him, and all that immediately proceeds from him, as it doth more immediately proceed. This only can be God's end. Indeed, the creature's end must be the display of this glory, when once it doth shine forth and come under their notice; then they are to reflect it from one to another, and to diffuse it among one another; so that there must be very different notions of the divine glory as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. And that this matter may be the more distinctly explicated withal, consider two things here: first, the form, and, secondly, the matter, of this saying of the angels in this part of it. "Glory to God in the highest," which is the principal part of the effect or end of this undertaking, the Redeemer's descent into this world; it was to produce glory to God in the highest, as it should produce, in due time, peace on earth, a reconciliation between God and man. I say, the former of this speech is to be inquired into. What doth it mean, that it should be here said, "Glory to God in the highest?" And then, the matter of it, and what is signified under it, we shall come more distinctly to inquire into afterwards.

(1.) For the form of this speech, that it may be rightly understood, we must consider from what mouth it comes, or who are the speakers, who they are that utter it: they are an heavenly host; a most numerous heavenly host; an host of angels that descend upon this account, in this juncture of time, (as it were,) upon a visit, upon a kind visit unto our earth, and to pay a dutiful homage unto the Son of God, whose descent they wait upon at his first arrival into this world of ours. The form of expression will very much be collected by considering the speakers. And nothing, indeed, could be more decorous, more becoming, than that they should be first employed upon such an errand as this, who are the speakers and mouth by whom this first summary of the gospel is communicated amongst men, here in our world. It was fit there should be such messengers employed and sent; to wit, to celebrate his arrival into our world, who was so great an one, and who came upon so great an errand.

Let us but take notice, by the way, (before we come to collect from hence what the form of this saying must import,) why it should be said by such speakers, a multitude, a choir of angels, who were employed to utter it. Why, that was not all their business, to utter this saying here to a company of shepherds; that falls in with it, and that very aptly; but their great business is to wait upon the first arrival of the Son of God into this world, as a due honour to him. Upon which account we are told, (Heb. i. 6.) "That when he brought his first born into the world, all the angels of God were to worship him," or to pay an homage to him. When he brought this his first-born into the world, this was (as it were) a decree then published in heaven: "Now let all the angels of God worship him." The thing also refers to 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels." Seen? How seen? Not barely looked upon as by a company of gazers, or of idle, unconcerned spectators; but seen, beheld with an adoring eye; every one seeing and adoring at once.

It was a suitable dignity and honour to them; and it was very suitable from them, considering what a state the Son of God was now coming into. A state that was to be "a little lower than the angels," as Heb. ii. 7. quoted from the 8th Psalm, or "lower for a little while." So the word admits to be read. That in as much as this humiliation of his was spontaneous and voluntary, he might not lose their homage by it: and undoubtedly they tendered it him. That self-depression was elective, not necessitated; therefore, he was not to lose by it: he descends, goes down into a state a little lower than the angels; therefore, the justice of heaven determined thus concerning him, and the justice of their minds could not but so consent and fall in with it. "You shall pay your homage to the descending Son of God; he shall lose nothing that is due from you *(cœlites)* the inhabitants of heaven, for this self-debasement." Therefore, though this descent of his was to look with a dark side towards this our earth, because here he was to appear in obscurity; the ends of his coming down here among men would never have been composed and brought about, if he had been to shine as an illustrious person, in bright celestial glory, visibly and openly attended with guards of angels; his work would never have been done; he could never, on those terms, have arrived to the cross, which was finally the thing he had in his eye and design. Therefore, I say, this

descent of his must look with a dark side here towards us here below. But yet, care was taken that it should look with a bright side in heaven above, that the glorious inhabitants there, might be kept in a dutiful, adhering posture towards him, as understanding their own subserviency, and subjection to him; and that he was their Lord still, though he did voluntarily go down into a state a little lower than theirs; lower for a little while. Therefore, upon occasion, their subserviency to him is plainly signified, when he was at the lowest, in his last agonies, angels came and ministered unto him. And so his descent looks with a bright side towards heaven, and those vaster numbers of intelligent minds, that do inhabit those regions; all was lightsome thitherwards, and must be, though it was necessary it should look with a dark kind of gloominess and obscurity towards men on earth, that the design might be accomplished and not frustrated, for which he did descend and come down into this world.

And so much being premised, it is now obvious to collect what the form is of this same diction, this same saying, by these excellent, dutiful creatures. It must carry with it,

[1.] The form of an acclamation, giving glory to God; proclaiming the divine glory, upon this wonderful product of his wisdom and love, that began now to appear, and obtain, and take place in this world. It was an acknowledgment that he was worthy to receive all honour, and glory, upon this account. And,

[2.] It must bear, too, the form of an apprecation, that is, wishing he might continually do so; that all glory and honour might be continually given to God in the highest. And,

[3.] It might carry in it, too, the form of a narration, there being no verb in the sentence; and therefore, is to be understood as much as if it had been said, "Glory is to God in the highest;" that is, it is a representation how well the glorious inhabitants of the upper world were at that time employed, to wit, in celebrating the divine glory, and giving glory to him. This is the business of heaven: and upon this account, that the Son of God is now descended and come down upon this earth, it is their business on earth to be all giving glory to God in the highest. Or,

[4.] It may be also an invitation to angels above, and men below, so to do. All the glorious inhabitants of heaven, who behold and see; and so, likewise, all the men, and

wretched and miserable inhabitants of this earth, who are concerned in all that is now done, join in this, giving glory to God in the highest. And,

[5.] It may be a demand or claim of glory to God in the highest; not only a mere invitation, but a challenge: "Let God have his due glory; withhold not his glory from him. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Psalm cl. last. Let the universe praise him, upon account of this marvellous undertaking, that his own Son is come down in glory, veiled and obscured into this world. And it may, in the last place,

[6.] Carry with it the form of a prediction; Glory shall be to God in the highest. As heaven is now full of this thing, earth shall be full of it; God will have his glory, even to the full, out of this wonderful thing, a thing infinitely more wonderful than the creation of this world was; even the extraction of such an universe out of nothing: that God should come down, and be manifest in such flesh as the children of men do wear, and carry about them here upon earth. We do all predict Glory to God in the highest hereupon. So great a thing can never be, but there must be a production of glory to God in the highest, some time or another, as far proportionable hereunto, as the capacity of such creatures can admit. He will not lose his glory. We foretel he shall have his glory, even from all the ends of the earth, directed to him in the highest, arising and springing up from this very thing. But then,

(2.) The matter expressed and signified under this various form, that will also require some further explication too, which now I shall not enter into: but, in the mean time, let us consider,

[*Use.*] Doth heaven appear to have been so full of this thing, the descent of the Son of God into this world, when we were the persons concerned? What amazing stupidity is it, that our souls should not be more taken up about it? It was, indeed, partly duty to God, and to the Son of God, that these blessed angels should be in such a transport upon this occasion: but it was also benignity and kindness, and wonderful kindness towards us. When they saw what was designed to us, they give glory to God in the highest, upon the prospect they had of peace springing up towards us on earth, and of the view they had by retrospection upon the divine good-will: finding now that anciently, and heretofore, his delights must have been with the children of men; (as miserable as their state and condition

was;) not upon the account of what they now were, but upon the account of what he would one day make them. He would yet one day make them a delectable sort of creatures. The angels of God are full of this; and heaven was full of it. And we are not to think it was only so seventeen hundred years ago; that the thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious inhabitants of heaven are lower about these matters now: no; there is the same occasion, and the same sense. They are in the same joyous and dutiful raptures, upon account of what was doing and designing hereupon earth, for producing of peace to men, and glory to himself.

What an amazing stupidity is it, that all this should signify so little with us? That when we are the persons chiefly concerned; when hell may be designing upon us from beneath, heaven is designing upon us from above; yet we are in a deep sleep all this while, neither feel the drawings of hell downward, nor the drawings of heaven upward. Hell is working upon us, and heaven is working upon us, and we seem insensible of the designs of either; the destructive designs of the one, or the kind designs of the other: but vanity fills our minds, and we wear out a few days here upon this earth, without considering what we are here for, or what the Son of God did one day come hither for! What awakenings do we need? And before God shall have his glory, and the earth its peace, what wonderful changes are there yet to be wrought in the minds and spirits of men? And surely if God have any kindness for us, there will be great change wrought upon us.

LECTURE XLVI*.

But now to go on to the second thing, the material import of these words; that is, that whereas, by universal consent, the glory of God is the end of all things, it must be very differently understood as it is his end, and as it is the creature's end. It cannot be understood in reference to both the same way.

In reference to the creature, it ought to be their design (to wit, the design of all reasonable creatures) to glorify God, by owning and by diffusing his glory to the uttermost. Their glorifying God consists in these two things; the

* Preached, January 12, 1694.

first whereof is fundamental to the second, the agnition of his glory, and the manifestation of his glory. The acknowledgment of it in their own minds and souls, owning him to be the most glorious one. They add no glory to him; it is not possible they can; but they only acknowledge and take notice of, and adore, that which is; confess him to be what he is, and what he should be. And the manifestation of his glory; the spreading and propagating of it, as much as is possible, from one to another, through the world, even to their uttermost, at least, in the wish and desire of their own hearts. "Be thou exalted above the heavens, and thy glory over all the earth," as it is again and again found in Psalm lvii. and in multitudes of like passages of Scripture. "So is our light to shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. That his glory may be transmitted by some to others, and by them to others, and so spread to our uttermost universally unto all.

But the matter is quite otherwise to be understood, when we speak of God's glory, as his own end. And it is very needful that we should state this matter to ourselves aright, lest we otherwise take up thoughts very unsuitable, and very dishonourable, and very injurious, to the great and blessed God. That design which hath been already mentioned, upon our first acknowledgment in our own minds and hearts, the excellent glory of the divine being, then to diffuse and spread it, is a most worthy and becoming end for creatures, nothing more. It ought to be their very terminative end; the end of ends with them; to wit, the end that must terminate all that they do. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God," is that great practical maxim, 1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever we do, must be done, must be all consecrated unto this end, have a stamp of holiness put upon it, by a dedication "to the glory of God." That is (as it were) to be the inscription upon every design, and upon every action, in pursuance of any of our designs. What can be expressed with larger and fuller universality. Whatsoever ye do (eating and drinking not excepted) is to have, and be levelled at this end, the glory of God, as being most suitable to the creature. But this is no end worthy of God, the matter being understood and taken so. Indeed, it is suitable enough for any one to design the praise of another; but it is not suitable to any one to design his own praise as his end. It would be thought unworthy of a wise and

good man, to do such and such good actions for this as his principal end, that he may be well thought of, and may be well spoken of by others. But the goodness, and suitableness, and agreeableness, of good actions in themselves to his own spirit, is his great inducement to any one that doth partake of the image of God, and that is so far become God-like.

But when we speak of God's having his own glory for his end, (whereas his glory as it is our end, doth but signify our agnition of it, or our manifestation of it, which is not his essential glory,) it is God's essential glory that must be his end; for he can have no end but himself. He is his own first and last: his own Alpha and Omega: and so his glory is, then, his essential glory, which is the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, shining to his own eye, which is his end. For only wisdom can be a competent judge of infinite excellency. And glory doth import and carry in the notion of it, a reference to a judicative principle, as the word from whence *esteem* doth come, plainly enough imports. He only is capable of judging what is worthy of himself: and so it is the rectitude of his own designs, as they lie in his own eternal mind, that lies before him under the notion of his end.

But it must be understood, too, that this is not his end neither, to be pursued by a desiderative will, but only by a fruitive; not by a desiderative will, as if there were any thing wanting to him; with us, indeed, all our end is always looked upon by us, as a thing to be attained; and that is suitable to the state of a creature, to act for an end to be obtained, and which we are yet short of. But all things are always present to him, to his all-comprehending mind, and especially that which belongs only to his own being, to which there can be no addition. He doth will himself; not with a desiderative will, but with a fruitive, a complacential will; and so doth act within himself, not from indigency, (as creatures do,) but from a superabundant, all-sufficient, self-sufficient fulness: He enjoys himself in himself.

And this is obvious enough to every one that will use his understanding to consider, as well as it is a philosophical maxim, in which all sorts of considering and studious men have agreed. And, I say, it is apprehensible enough to others when it is considered, that one's end, and one's good, are convertible terms, and signify the same thing. *Finis et bonus, convertuntur,* philosophers use to say; to wit, that

which is any one's ultimate end, which is so *de jure*, is his highest and chiefest good. Now nothing is plainer than that there is no good adequate to God, but himself: so that he cannot have his ultimate, final complacency, in any thing besides himself. And his glory, his essential glory, the lustre of all the excellencies of his being, is his end: not that which he covets and proposes as distant and unattained; but which he enjoyeth, and acquiesceth in, and which he cannot but have always in his own possession, as he cannot but be in the entire, uninterrupted, everlasting, possession of the excellencies of his own being.

And it ought seriously to be considered, that so we may not in our own thoughts debase the eternal, most excellent, and most blessed Being, by supposing that he proposeth it to himself as his end, to aim at that which would be thought unworthy of a wise and good man to aim at: that is, only to be well thought of, and applauded. This is a thing that is consequent, and which ought to be, and which we ought to propose to ourselves as our end. But it is too low and mean an end for God. We may design that for another man, to wit, his praise, which no other man, who is wise and good, will design for himself; but take pleasure in the rectitude of his design, and that goodness of his own actions; and enjoy them as every good man doth in bearing the image of God upon him. And therefore, this is a god-like thing; and so must be in the highest perfection in the ever blessed God himself, and in the excellency of his own being, and in the correspondent rectitude of all his own designs. But this is that which must consequently, and secondarily, come under the common notice of his intelligent and apprehensive creatures, whereupon it is their business, and indispensable duty, to own, and adore, and honour him, for the good that is in him; to wit, to think well and honourably of him, and speak well and honourably of him, upon this account, even as goodness in men, and amongst men, is a thing that claims and challenges acknowledgment and praises from them within whose notice it comes. And then,

2. That being the primary thing here spoken of, which is to result out of this great design, "Glory to God in the highest," all capable and apprehensive creatures being obliged, to their uttermost, to celebrate and glorify him, upon the account of what he was now doing in reference to this wretched world; that being, I say, the first result of this undertaking, upon which our Lord Jesus Christ

was now descending and coming down into this world, the second is—"Peace on earth." And that former was to spring out of this latter, as the whole economy of grace in that mentioned 4th chapter to the Ephesians, a design for the glory of God's grace; to wit, it is to be designed by all the subjects, and all the observers thereof.

And now concerning this peace on earth, I shall speak but very briefly to it, in my way to the third thing which I most principally intended, in my pitching upon this Scripture; to wit, the original and fountain of all the good-will after mentioned. This peace upon earth must be understood to design, first, somewhat more primarily; and then, secondly, somewhat more secondarily, and dependent upon the former.

The primary intendment of it must be peace between God and man, the inhabitants of this earth, its principal and more noble inhabitants, in relation to the state of war and hostility that was between him and them, they having revolted from him, agreed and combined in a rebellion against him; not only with one another, but with the other apostate creatures, who had made a defection before, the angels that fell and so drew man in as their accomplices in that horrid revolt. And this must be observed as spoken too with discrimination, as we shall have hereafter occasion to note to you: "Peace on earth"—not with hell: there is no proclamation of peace reaching that place. Those kind, benign creatures, this glorious host of angels, this celestial chorus, though it is like enough it might have been suitable to their inclinations (if that had been the design and counsel of heaven) to have carried tidings, and a message of peace, to their fellow creatures, of their own order and rank, in the creation of God; yet while it appears this had no place in the divine counsel, and they being so perfectly resigned creatures, and having the same will (objectively considered) with the divine, that is, not willing a different sort of objects from what he willed; they joyfully come on this errand to men on earth.

The will of God is perfectly complied with in heaven; that will which our desires, while we are here on earth, are to be guided by; in our measure we are to desire God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. It is perfectly complied with in heaven: they cannot have a dissentient will from their Maker; and, therefore, must

be understood to have been contentedly employed upon this errand, to proclaim peace, peace to the inhabitants of this earth, when they had none to proclaim for the inhabitants of that other horrid region; knowing that they, who were their brethren, and of their own order, in the creation of God, were bound up in the chains of everlasting darkness, without remedy or mercy, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day, they willingly come upon this errand, to proclaim peace to the inhabitants of this earth, and are made use of as heralds in this proclamation.

And as this peace must principally be between God and man, so it must be understood to be mutual in the intendment of it between both, that God should be reconciled to them, and they should be reconciled unto God. And, indeed, there can be no such thing as peace between God and man upon other terms: for if he were willing upon other terms to be reconciled to man, it would be altogether insignificant, and to no purpose. He would be reconciled to an unreconciled or irreconcileable man, whose heart should still remain filled with enmity, poisoned with malignity and venom against God. It would be to no purpose to him, for man would be no nearer felicity: and it is impossible for me to be happy in what I hate: and it is also impossible for the children of men to be happy in any thing but God.

Now supposing this peace to be mutual between God and man; to wit, he is reconciled to them, and they are reconciled to him, the prosecution of his justice doth cease, and their enmity towards him ceaseth; there is no longer a contest kept up between his justice and their injustice; then this mutual peace must carry in it two things, agreeable to what is carried in the notion of peace between one nation, or sort of people, and another that have been mutually at war with one another; that is, there is somewhat privative, and somewhat positive, carried in such cases in the notion of peace;—1st. a cessation of hostility, and, 2ndly, freedom of commerce.

1. A cessation of hostility. They no longer war with one another; God doth no longer pursue them with revenge, with hostile acts in that kind; that is, if once a peace be brought about, whenever this peace obtains, and hath its effect, he doth no longer follow them with acts of vengeance. And they do no longer rise up against him in acts of hatred and aversion: they no longer say to him,

"Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" they are no longer fighting against the righteousness and equity of his holy precepts, as the carnal mind is "enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be." All this ceaseth; that is, it cannot be now in any prevalency, in a prevailing degree. And thereupon,

2. That which is positive doth ensue. As it was between nation and nation, which were at war, there is not only a cessation of hostilities, but there is a setting on foot a commerce, an amicable commerce, a free commerce; so it is between God and man now: there is not only no war, but there is a communion, there is a friendly intercourse: God freely flows in upon them in acts of grace, kindness, and goodness. His Spirit was under a restraint before, (according to the doom and judgment past—"My Spirit shall no longer strive,") is now at liberty, set at liberty, from under these restraints. It now freely breathes upon those souls, emits its light, lets it shine in upon them, pours in the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the vital, sanative influences of that Sun, who is said to "arise with healing in his wings," or beams. These vital, healing beams are, by the Spirit of Christ, freely transmitted, let into the very hearts and souls of such creatures, as were at utmost distance from God before.

Alas! there was nothing to do between God and them, in a way of kindness or friendliness: his Spirit was a stranger to them; no beams of holy light ever shone upon them; no influence of grace; they went with barren and desolate souls, wrapt up in darkness and death: but now the way is open and free; there is no law against it, no bar, but the communications of the Holy Ghost may be without obstruction. And, thereupon, their spirits are set at liberty towards God, and his Spirit is at liberty towards them, and and not withheld. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Their soul was under restraint and clouds before, a prisoner under the divine wrath and justice. They could not act, could not move, could not stir, God-ward; not so much as breathe, nor direct a breath towards God; no holy desires, no holy motions. But now when commerce is restored, as the Divine Spirit freely breathes on them, it enables them freely to breathe after God, to send forth desires, and take up their highest delight in him, so as to enable them to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or whom can I desire on earth in

comparison of thee?" Psalm lxxiii. 25. This is the primary intendment of this peace, proclaimed by this glorious host of angels: this is the thing primarily intended to be brought about, and which shall have its effect, more or less, and more largely, before the world ends. But then, there is,

2. That which is consequential thereunto, to be considered, and that is—peace upon earth, among the inhabitants of it towards one another. This is not the primary design, but it is the secondary, consequential aim and effect of the great Peace-Maker's undertaking, whereof there was a precedent and a leading case in the reconciliation that was first to be brought about between Jew and Gentile. "He is our peace, having made both one," Ephes. ii. 13. so as that the highest enmities and animosities that ever were between one sort of people and another, were to be taken up between these Jews and Gentiles. How contumeliously were the Jews wont to speak of the Gentiles; and how ignominously did they again speak of them. And the fraction was yet more fierce between the Jews and the Samaritans, that were all Israelites, all of one house: insomuch that common courtesies could not pass between them, as appears by that in the 4th chapter of John. "How dost thou," (saith the Samaritan woman to Christ,) being a Jew, ask water of me, that am a Samaritan? How strange is it, how can you expect that I, being a Samaritan, should give drink to you that are a Jew?" And so great was the distance between the Jews and other nations, that pagan writers have taken much notice of it. *Non monstrare vias* (saith a pagan poet) *eadem nisi sacra volenti; that a few would not so much as shew the way to one that was not of their own religion;* no, not that common courtesy to tell a traveller his way. Why, he is our peace, he that brings it about, that shall finally, sooner or later, bring about an universal peace, not only between Jew and Gentile, (which was a precedent, a ruling case,) but among the several nations of the earth.

"He is our peace, when the Assyrian is in our land," and it is to be an universal thing foretold and prophesied; to wit, that "swords are to be beaten into plough shares, and spears into pruning hooks, and that men should learn war no more," when once the peaceful tendency of the kingdom of the Messiah doth reach its final and full effect; when it hath effect according to its tendency, so that, at the same time that the earth shall be filled with the know-

ledge of God, as the waters cover the seas, then is there to be that universal peace on earth too, among men towards one another; not only no more hurting or destroying in all the mountain of his holiness, but nation shall not lift up sword or hand against nation, and men shall be untaught that fierceness of nature, which a continued enmity against God had inferred on them: for when the union was once broken between God and man, it must appear, they must must be made to understand and know to their cost, that that was central. And that union being dissolved, all union was dissolved besides, that they can never be at peace one with another, when they have broken with God, and the breach remains between him and them. According to what was emblematically held forth in reference to God, and the people of Israel and Judah; that is, by the two staves of beauty and of bands; the staff of beauty signifying the union between him and them; and the staff of bands the union between them with one another. But when one of these staves is broken, the other is shivered and shaken all to pieces.

Why this is the import of what is here proclaimed, the final and ultimate import of it—"Glory to God in the highest," and then, "peace on earth." This is the double effect of this great undertaking, upon which our Lord did now descend and come down into this world. But here comes next to be considered,

The principle, the well-spring, the eternal well-spring of this glorious and kind design; a design so glorious to God, and so kind to man, what is the fountain and well-spring of all? Nothing else but his own good-will. And this is the thing I mainly intended to insist upon from this scripture. That having so largely discoursed to you of the apostacy, the fall of the first man, and then of the fallen state of man; and of the way wherein man hath been continued in this fallen state, from age to age, and from generation to generation, I might afterwards come to speak of his designed restitution and recovery. And being so to do, (as the order of discourse should lead,) I shall tell you briefly what the scheme of our discourse now must be; to wit,

I. To speak of the original and fountain of this designed restitution of such fallen and lapsed creatures. And,

II. Of the constitution of a Redeemer and a Mediator in order hereunto. And,

III. To shew what sort of person this Redeemer or Mediator must be; to wit, to treat of his person, of his nature, of his offices, and of his performances. And then,

IV. To lay before you the doctrine of the Covenant of God in Christ. And,

V. The office and operations of the Holy Ghost in the dispensation, and pursuantly to the design of the Covenant. And then,

VI. The effects wrought in all that shall actually appertain and belong to God, and be brought home to him, in and by Christ, this Great Head of the *reducees*, of returning souls. And then,

VII. The way and course of such as shall be thus savingly wrought upon, that holy work in which they are thereupon to be engaged, and wherein they are to persist, till they reach the end of that way. And then, lastly,

VIII. The end of all things, with the several things that shall be coincident thereunto.

The first thing in the course and order of discourse comes naturally to be insisted upon, (when we are to consider this business of the restitution of man,) is the original of such a design. Whence sprung it? What is the fountain, the well-head and spring of this great design? Why, good-will towards men. This is the summary account that the matter admits of. It can be from nothing else but mere good-will towards men. And in speaking to this, I have a two-fold subject of discourse; to wit, first, God's general good-will, and, 2ndly, his special good-will. His good-will wherein it doth appear and is expressed towards men generally and indefinitely considered; and his good-will in its more peculiar expressions, and exertions of itself towards a select sort of men. And so two things to be evinced.

1. That God's good-will, it hath some reference unto all. But,

2. That it hath not equal reference to all alike. There will be that two-fold subject of discourse distinctly to be pursued. And the former of these I chiefly intend from this scripture; the latter I intend from another more suitable scripture.

But, in the mean time, pray well inlay this in your own minds, that there are two such distinct sorts of divine good-will, or benignity, respecting men generally, and respecting some men especially; and that these two are by no means in the world opposed to one another. The doing of which, as it is a most unreasonable thing in itself, so it is a thing of the worst consequence that can be supposed; that is, it tends to confound the whole Christian Economy, to break the frame of Christianity, and make it an unintelligible scheme, as incoherent with itself; and this without any pretence, or shadow of a pretence. For these two things—general good-will, and special good-will; or as the generality of divines are wont to distinguish, common and special grace; these two, I say, are as distinguishable things, and as capable of being distinctly apprehended, as the general and special natures of any thing else that we can think of.

Now nothing could be more absurd to pretend, that because I have the notion of such and such a general nature, therefore, I must not admit the notion of a special nature, that is narrower than that; and superadds distinguishing to the former. As if when a person hath understood that God hath made such a sort of creatures as we are wont to call animals, living creatures, (that being the notion of a living creature at large,) that therefore, I should pretend there should be a difficulty of understanding the nature of man, one particular under that general; because I have the notion of a living creature taken at large, to wit, a creature that useth sense, that can see, and hear, and exerciseth spontaneous motion, can move this way and that, this, therefore, should be an hindrance to me in conceiving the special nature of man, a nobler sort of creature, that can do all this and something else; to wit, can reason and understand, and lay designs and pursue them, and is a subject susceptible of religion too, as well as ratiocination, would any man of ordinary understanding pretend an inconsistency between these two; or that I cannot fitly conceive the one sort of nature, because I do conceive the other? Because I do conceive the general notion of a living creature, an animal taken at large, therefore,

I can the less conceive or take in the special notion of a particular sort of living creatures, that can do more than an ordinary living creature, taken at large.

And the difficulty is not greater if we carry the matter higher or further, and consider that man, as man, having the natural image of God upon him, as such, may be conceived accordingly. And so that object, God's natural image remaining in him, terminates a general divine benignity. And consider, also, the same sort of creatures having, likewise somewhat beyond and superadded to the mere natural image of God, to wit, his holy image; this is the effect, (wherever it is, as the case of man is now become,) and can be the effect of nothing else, but special grace: but this I only lay before you by the way to that which we are to insist upon particularly.

LECTURE XLV.*

LUKE II. 14.

Good-will towards Men.

THE former branches of this verse, wherein these angels proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," have been opened, and something hath been said about this good-will towards men, both as it is general and special.

Now as to this general good-will of God to men, I shall,

1. Labour to evince it to you in an absolute consideration. And then, shall,

2. Speak in comparison of the way of his dealing with another sort of offending creatures, of an higher and nobler order than men. Now,

1. To evince this general good-will to men, according to the absolute consideration that is to be had of it, I shall make use of two sorts of mediums or arguments to that purpose,

(1.) Of such as are antecedent to a more express gospel revelation; and which will therefore respect them that have not the gospel, or that never had it. And,

(2.) Such as may be taken from the gospel itself, of which you have a summary, an epitome, in this same

* Preached January 19, 1694.

angelical proclamation from heaven: it seeming suitable to the majesty of God, to make his angels, though not the ordinary ambassadors, yet the extraordinary ones, of this gracious declaration of his mind and counsel towards men.

But as to both these sorts of arguments, I have this to advertise you, that the main thing I shall propose to myself in alleging them, will not be so much the evincing of the truth in this matter: for that is clear in itself, shines in its own light; and indeed as to this part of God's general good-will to men, or that which is usually called common grace, I can have no adversary, we have none to oppose us in this thing, except Atheists. It is true, indeed, as to the other part, (his special grace,) there we have very subtil adversaries; and when we come to that part, I do hope, through God's assistance, we shall be enabled to maintain the truth against them. But here my more principal design is, to let you see, by the arguments I shall allege, (which will clear the truth too,) the mighty importance of what we are now asserting, and to what purpose it is that we ought to assert this general good-will of God to men. Indeed, that we shall have occasion more distinctly to shew, when we come to the use. But I shall hint some of the more eminent purposes now, that it may the more engage the attention of all our minds unto what is to be insisted on to this purpose.

It will be of most direct use to convince, and (if it will seem good to God so far to bless his word) to mollify the hearts of hardened sinners that have yet nothing of special grace appearing to them, or in them, so as to make way for that, it being God's course to work methodically; and to make things, which have an aptitude thereto, subservient unto other things, that are to be consequent thereupon. It would certainly induce any, that would use their thoughts, to look upon it as a black and horrid thing to be, in the course of my life, with an obstinate, obdurate heart fighting continually against goodness itself, and against kindness and good-will.

And it is of mighty importance, too, for the relieving of awakened and doubting souls, that may be hurried with terrors and temptations about their state God-wards; and who, though (it may be) special grace hath taken place in them, yet think it hath not; so as to let them see what relief is yet in their case, (as black as it looks to be,) while they are under the dispensation of more general and com-

mon grace, as hath a leadingness and tendency in it unto special.

And there is that too, which will be of general import to all of us, every day, to wit, that we may be brought more to value, and to savour, and relish those mercies which commonly go into the account, and under the *census* of common mercies, of which (God knows) we have too little sense. It is a most unaccountable absurdity, (that I have often reflected on in my own thoughts,) that very generally mercies should be thought less valuable, for that very reason for which they are the more valuable. And so it is commonly in reference to those that are called common mercies: they are less valued for the self-same reason for which they should be more valued; that is, because they come in an ordinary and in a constant course. As health, because it is constant, or is more ordinary, with the most, it may be, it is for that very reason less valued: but every body that considers, knows, that for that very reason it is the more valuable. It is better sure to have continual health, than health intermitted. So the use of our senses, our sight, (for instance,) the noblest of all the rest, because it is a common mercy, therefore it is cheap, and of less account with the most. How great a thing would it be thought, if a man should see but one hour in the day! How would the return of that hour be longed for! Or if but one day in the year; O when will that day come! We need to have the value enhanced more with us of such things as are indications of God's good-will towards men in general, that they may have their due weight with us, and that grateful savour and relish in our spirits which they challenge. And let us, therefore,

1. Upon such considerations go on to take notice of those arguments of the first rank, those which lie without the compass of the gospel-revelation, that were antecedent to that more explicit revelation of it, and do fill a larger sphere and region than that whither the gospel light diffuses and extends itself: for though it be true that the text hath a special reference to that glorious revelation which was now to commence, we are not to think that this good-will was then first to commence, as if God did then but begin more distinctly and explicitly to own it, and speak it out; but there were *not* obscure indications of it before, and which did commonly obtain all the world over, even there where gospel light obtained not.

I shall, therefore, in speaking to that head of arguments,

shew what it is that men might collect (if they would use their thoughts and understandings aright) from such appearances of divine favour towards them. And because that the reasonings of men may be looked upon as having an uncertainty in them, a sort of lubricity, and that we cannot with so much clearness conclude from mere arguings that are to be fetched from principles that lie without the compass of scripture; lest any one should think them infirm upon that account, I shall shew you, as we go along, how scripture doth strengthen the same sort of arguments; and how we are directed and prompted even by scripture itself, to make use of them to the same purposes. And that which I shall insist on, is,

1. The very nature of God, whereof all men that have the use of their understandings, have or are capable of having some notion or other. For he hath stamped more or less of his nature upon the very nature of man, upon the human nature that carries in it a signature of God. There is somewhat that may be known of God in men generally. But there is no notion of God that is more obvious unto any that do apprehend the existence of a Deity at large, than that he is the Best of Beings, the first seat of all goodness, kindness, and benignity. And this revelation of God, though it be natural, it is from himself, who is the author of all nature, and of this very nature in special; the immediate author, the author so as to be the exemplar of it to the human nature; that is a godlike nature in its first origination. And we are confirmed in it, that is not a false conception of God which we find to have obtained generally in the pagan world, *Optimus Maximus*, that hath been the common heathen language concerning him. But this is an impression from himself upon the mind of man, by which he is taught and instructed, even by nature itself, so to conceive of him.

And he speaks agreeably hereunto of himself, when he tells us his name. There is this sculpture, this signature of his name upon the minds of men every where, till men have studiously and industriously abolished and rased it out, which yet totally they cannot do neither; not so, but that the remainders of such a notion as this, cleaving to their minds, do fill their souls with so much the more horror by intervals, that they have been lately engaged in a course of wickedness, and in an hostility even against the Best of Beings, against Goodness itself. Those pangs which

such do find at such times in their own spirits from a a secret and remaining suspicion, that when they have done all they can to think God out of being, they have been but rolling a returning stone; they have been but labouring for the wind; they can effect nothing when the thoughts return upon them, when in spite of them they must be yet constrained to conceive with a certain *formido*, that God is, though it may have been the wish of their hearts, O that he were not! then the main engine of their torture must be the apprehended goodness of God: For,

Do but consider if indeed he is, (whom we would fain think into nothing if it were possible,) then it cannot be but he must excel in goodness; the first thing conceptible in his nature, must be goodness. Mere philosophy hath taught men so to think of God, to think of the God, as a notion antecedent unto that of power and might. They place that in the very summitude of all that excellency, which they ascribe to the Divine Being. And so when God himself will expressly tell us his name, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; though he will in no wise clear the guilty—a thing most consistent with the most excellent goodness; for that goodness were fatuity, were stolidity, that were unaccompanied with such a severity, that were unexpressive of it. So he speaks of himself, who best knows his own nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, 8. And the scripture is full of it elsewhere. That there is such a natural notion as this generally obtaining in the minds of men, is above all demonstration,—that it cannot but be so, that it must be so; for what is universal, must proceed from an universal cause; but there is no universal cause, but God alone. And then,

2. This good-will of God towards men, is to be further argued from his continuing of man (though apostate, though revolted from him) in a possession of those original excellencies of his nature, that were most essential to it, through the several successions of time so long. That is as to such excellencies as are essential to the nature of man, these he is pleased to continue man in the possession of from age to age, and from generation to generation, though he be a revolted apostate creature. He might have transformed him into another thing. Men might

have produced monsters from one generation to another, and that as a mark of divine severity, for that once they did apostatize. Into what an horrid thing might man have been turned upon the first transgression; and so this habitable world be inhabited only by creatures that should be terrors to themselves, and one to another!

It may be said, that they are turned into worse than monsters by sin; and it is very true, they are so. But that is their own production, and not God's; so they have made themselves, that is true: they are in a moral sense monsters; but so they are their miscreants; they might have been so in a natural sense, and that could have been no injury or reflection upon the Author of their nature. Merely natural evil is justly punitive of, and doth animadvert upon that, which is moral.

But that it is not so; that man should be still as to his naturals, the same intelligent creature that he was; that he should from age to age appear upon the stage of this earth, with a mind and understanding capable of comprehending so great things; that this understanding power should be so many ways improveable; that the soul to which it belongs should be so commodiously lodged in a tabernacle so curiously wrought by divine art, with God's own hand, and all the parts and members thereof written in his book; a contemplation, that put the psalmist into a transport, "Fearfully and wonderfully was I made, and that my soul knoweth right well. And how precious are thy thoughts to me, O God!" They were these thoughts that he was reflecting on, concerning the very frame, and make, and nature of man, in that 139th Psalm, and which he considers in so high a rapture of spirit.

We are encompassed with wonders, and we take no notice of them; that such creatures as we should spring up in a succession, a noble sort of creatures, God-like—bearing the natural image of God upon us. Thus it is with man; though revolted, yet God lets him live upon this earth, and propagate, and continue his kind. Let him (saith he) wear my image, to put him in mind, and that they may put one another in mind, whence they were, and who was the original of life and being to him, and of that nature which they have: a strange indulgence, and a most emphatical argument of the divine benignity, that he will let such creatures go up and down in this world, with his

image upon them, though they have fallen from him, and are universally engaged in a war and hostility against him!

You have heard, heretofore, (and I hope generally have not forgotten, at least cannot be ignorant,) of the necessary distinction of the natural image of God and the moral. And this is the wonder, that where the moral image of God is gone, men have put it away and blotted it out, that yet the natural remains. And God lets it be so, and lets such a sort of creatures still descend, and possess, and inhabit, this world; minds, spirits, so commodiously lodged in so aptly figured tabernacles of flesh, where they have so many organs for the use and improvement of the reasonable and immortal mind, that is put into those tabernacles as the inhabitant; by which it can exercise sense, and take in all the light, and lustre, and glory, of this world, and enjoy the sensitive objects wherewith it is so variously replenished. A continual argument of God's benignity and good-will towards men: but especially that he continues him an intelligent understanding creature upon this earth. A thing that Pagans have been apprehensive of with gratitude; and it is a shame that we should not consider it more. It is that which history hath transmitted to us, concerning that noble Pagan, Plato, that when he lay a dying, he solemnly gave God thanks that he had made him a man, and not a beast; and that he had made him a Grecian, and not a Barbarian; and that he had made him to live in the time wherein Socrates lived, who was so great a luminary in his time.

But how great things have we to recount as additional to the human nature. The human nature itself is that which I am now principally pointing at, as an argument to us, of God's good-will towards men, that he lets men continue as to their natural being, what they were through so many ages wherein they have been in an apostacy from him, and rebellion against him; especially when we consider that it is improveable; for religion hath its ground, its foundation in humanity, in the human nature; otherwise, a brute or a stone might be a capable subject of religion. But inasmuch as God doth continue the human nature, and make that descend, he doth thereby continue capable subjects of religion, and capable subjects of blessedness; since religion and felicity are the two most connatural things to one another in all the world. And thus scripture

doth also teach us to recount with ourselves; to consider, to deduce, and make our collections from it, when it tells us of the spirit that is in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding, to make him wiser than the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. And when we are elsewhere told that the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching into the inward parts of the belly; to wit, into the most abstruse and hidden things, those that are most recondite within a man's-self. And, again,

3. This is a further argument of God's good-will towards men, generally considered, that they are taught and prompted even by nature itself, to consider and look upon God as some way related to them; to look upon him as upon a natural account, a father to them. For this is a true account. It is true, also, that there is a more special notion under which he is so to some, as we shall have occasion hereafter to shew; but he is so in a common notion too. So natural light hath taught men to account and reckon when they have spoken of God as the paternal mind. They have considered themselves as all having minds, and they have conceived of the divine mind, as the paternal mind, the Father of all those minds. They have spoken of themselves as God's offspring, and you see the scripture quotes that from one of their writers, and approves and justifies the notion, Acts xvii. 28. "We are all his offspring, as one of your own Poets hath affirmed." The thing is true, (saith he,) your own Poets have spoken thus concerning men, that they are the offspring of God: and they have apprehended the matter aright; they are so, he is upon a natural account a father to them: as Adam is said to be the Son of God on the same account.

And it is a conception that carries a gleam of light with it, that God should style himself the Father of spirits, but more particularly the God of the spirits of all flesh, as in that, Numbers xxvii. 16. It is true, that he is in a more particular way and sense the God of some. But they are his own words, to call himself also the God of all, of all spirits that inhabit and dwell in flesh. He doth not call himself the God of another sort of spirits, that inhabit not flesh, that have sinned against him, that are apostate spirits; (as the spirits of men also are;) but he calls himself the God of the spirits of all flesh, implying, that he hath not universally abandoned the spirits of men. As if he

should have said, "I do not renounce, I do not quit all claim to them, I have affairs to transact with them, as I have not with those other spirits, that are thrown out of my sight, and bound up in chains of darkness, and reserved to the judgment of the great day;" as I shall have occasion more directly to speak, when I come to speak of God's good will to men, considered comparatively with the course of his dispensation towards that other order of apostate creatures. And,

4. The constant exercise of God's patience is a great argument of his good-will towards men. This is that whereof they not only have a notion in their minds, comprehended and included in that common notion of his benignity and goodness, but they have experience of it in fact; and it is from that I am now arguing: and it is a mighty cogent and convictive argument of God's good-will, if it be but considered what men have to argue from, in reference hereunto, especially these two topics, their own guilt, and God's power.

Their own guilt; whereof, since man hath been a sinner, he hath had some natural conscience of guilt always accompanying him. And more or less men have consciences accusing and excusing, by turns, as the matter lies in view before us, Romans ii. 15. Now let recourse be had to that topic of men's own guiltiness, that hath deserved ill at the hands of God; this is a common notion with men. Many of your heathens, though they do not know how the apostacy came about, have generally granted that man was in a state of apostacy; that he is not in the state that he was at first made in, but in a degenerate sinful state; and it is spoken of as a thing common to men, what I noted to you but now, out of Romans ii. 15., that they carry accusing consciences about with them. I say, then, do but consider that topic, and from thence go to the other, that of the divine power: and nothing is more obvious to men, (if they will use their thoughts,) than to consider this, that he that made such a world as this, can easily right himself upon such creatures as we are in a moment, at his pleasure. Then lay but these two things together, (which are obvious to common apprehension,) that we are guilty creatures, and he is an omnipotent God; we have deserved that he should severely animadvert upon us, and he can do it at pleasure; hath it in his power to do it when he will; and yet we are spared. What doth all this signify, but a continual miracle of divine patience? And what is

that to be resolved into, but divine goodness? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance?"

When we argue from hence to persuade sinners to turn unto God, do we argue from a feigned thing? Is it not a great reality from which we are thus directed to argue, when the Scripture itself gives us the direction? It teaches men so to consider the matter themselves, as in that, 2 Peter iii. 9, 10. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but that they may come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved." And we are to account the long-suffering of the Lord salvation. What doth he bear with an offending creature for, in so continued a course, when he hath so many advantages against him, so many thunderbolts in command at a moment? Why doth he spare, when the creature is guilty, and he is mighty? And yet he spares: what judgment is to be made of all this? Why, the Apostle tells you: Count the long-suffering of the Lord salvation; to wit, that he doth use this method as an apt medium, as a proper means to bring men to consider: and if they will not consider, they are loading themselves with guilt; so much the more, when they will not consider what is so obvious, what lies so much in view before them. And I might add, again, this farther argument, from,

5. The common exercise of God's bounty towards the children of men; that is, that he doth not only spare, but sustain them; not only withhold and keep off from them destructive evils, but supply them needful good things. That he should preserve this world in so much consistency, for the use and entertainment of offending and rebellious creatures, those that seldom or never take notice of him, and rarely ever give him thanks. That this earth should be so strangely fertile, through all the successions of time, and productive of so delicious things, so pleasant things; not only such things as are necessary for the support of human life, but such things as are delectable too, yielding a pleasing entertainment to man during his residence and abode here. Oh, the riches of the Divine goodness towards apostate, degenerate, fallen creatures! These very things have a ducture, a leadingness with them. When God doth immediately please and gratify sense, there is an aptitude in this to instruct minds to reach the understandings of men, to

oblige and prompt men to consider whence all this is, and upon what terms, and for what ends and purposes.

There are divers other things congenerous to these, which I cannot go through with now, as the continual care that he takes of men's lives, that he hath put a self-preserving principle into men. It is true, that is natural, but how came it to be so? It is from the Author of all nature, he could have made (if he had pleased) the contrary as natural; that he hath prompted men to live in societies for common mutual defence; that he hath so severely threatened the sin of homicide, of killing or destroying a man; and for that very reason, because he bears his image. "This creature of mine I will not have touched, for he carries my image upon him: I will not have any violence offered to my image." That he did take so particular a care even of that wicked Cain himself; put his mark upon him, lest any finding him should slay him. It speaks a strange tendency of man, (though now an apostate,) that there is a peculiar sacredness put upon the life of man, beyond all other creatures that do inhabit this earth; because this is an improveable life; this is a thing that may be grafted upon; noble grafts may be inserted here into an human life; therefore, that I will have counted precious, and preserved as such; so as, that if any man shall make a breach upon the human life, he shall break through my law, which I set as a boundary and guard, to preserve so valuable and so precious a thing.

And then he takes such care for the keeping up of common order in this world, that he hath appointed magistracy, government, and laws, in order hereunto, that all may not run into confusion. They must break his laws before they can break one another's peace; that he hath obliged men to the mutual love of one another, wherein, if it were observed and complied with, what a calm peaceful region would this world be! So that men might have an opportunity to consider, at leisure, the greater concernments of another world. He hath, as to this, done several things most highly becoming the goodness and benignity of a God towards such creatures as we were become.

And then the obligation that he holds men under unto natural religion, and the several exercises of it. Here is a mighty demonstration of his good-will towards men, that he will not dispense with them as to this thing; but as common as human nature is, so common is his law running in that nature, obliging men to some religion or other; in

general to be religious, obliging them unto the several principles and duties of natural religion; to trust in God, and to love him as their supreme good, with all their heart and soul, and might, and mind, which is a natural law: to pray to him, to praise him, and give him thanks. And that, whereas he is pleased to have an house, a dwelling here on earth, that house is called the house of prayer to all nations, and he will have all flesh come to him; and complains that they do not come to him, *nor will come.* When looking down upon the children of men, to see who inquires and seeks after God, he finds all gone out of the way, that they will not do this; that they will not say, Where is God my Maker? This he complains of.

All this carries a mighty argument in it, that there is still a good-will in heaven towards men on earth, as neglectful of God and themselves as the children of men are generally become. And it is necessary that men should understand, and now that when they are charged, when God doth so highly charge them with sinning against his goodness, it is not a nullity that they are charged to offend against, in all their neglects of God: and, in justice to him, we are obliged to heighten and magnify his goodness to men; that so such as will never be won and overcome by this goodness of his, may be so much the more glorious trophies to that Justice which will vindicate the wrong upon them at last.

SERMONS.

I. On the gospel recommending itself to every man's conscience. Seven sermons, from 2 Cor. iv. 2.

II. They to whom the gospel is hid, are lost souls. Six sermons, from 2 Cor. iv. 3.

III. On hope. Fourteen sermons, from Rom. viii. 24.

IV. Friendship with God. Ten sermons, from James ii. 23.

V. On Regeneration. Thirteen sermons, from 1 John v. 1.

SERMON I.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

THESE words, joined with what goes before, run thus: "therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not: but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience." The import of this text and context is exceeding plain. The Apostle gives an account in them of his way in managing that work of the ministry, wherein he was engaged; that is, that his way of managing thereof was suitable to his end; his method to the design he drove at: he gives in the whole verse a double account of his way in managing his ministerial work—A negative account, and a positive.

1. A negative one, we have nothing to do in it, (as if he had said,) with the things of dishonesty or shame. Those things we have renounced; those hidden things that are wont to be accompanied with the pungent stings of shame and disgrace, (if they should not be hid.) That is, we have nothing to do with any thing whereof we have cause to be ashamed. Let them hide themselves, and their designs, and work in the dark; let them wear masks and vizards, and transact their affairs under ground, and with all possible privacy, who drive designs that they have rea-

* Preached January 11, 1690.

son to be ashamed of; whose business is either to trifle, or to do hurt; whose designs are either too low or little for wise men, or too base for good men. We, for our parts, design nothing but the service of God, the honour of Christ, and (as that which is subservient to these) the welfare of men. This is all that we aim at, that we may serve God, honour Christ, and bring in as many souls as we can unto him. We intend no worse to the world and the inhabitants of it, than to our utmost to make them good and happy christians in this world, and glorious creatures in another world.

And, therefore, all we have to do may very well be transacted above ground, and upon the square; we have no occasion to walk in craftiness, to use fraudulent arts or tricks; our business requires it not; nor do we need to handle the word of God deceitfully: we do not falsify (so the word signifies) it, disguise it, clothe it with other colours; for as it naturally looks with its own, it serves our purpose best of all, if we give it no other appearance or representation, than that which is still genuine and most proper to itself. We do none of these things that are mentioned in the former part of the verse. And then comes,

2. The positive account in the latter part of the verse. "By manifestation of the truth," we make it our business to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Where the last of these words do sufficiently express that sense which I design to insist upon in some following discourses. And herein, we see there is a principle in man, (here called conscience,) that renders him, in some measure, capable of judging what is proposed to him in the name of God, or under the notion of divine,—whether as such it ought to be received, or refused as not such. And here we have it signified to us, that there is in the great things of God, contained in the gospel, or which the gospel revelation doth suppose, a self-recommending evidence, by which such things do (as it were) approve themselves to that principle: and he lets us see that the faithful preachers of this gospel have the whole business directly and immediately lying with the consciences of men; or that they are to apply themselves to that principle in man called conscience. And further, that this treaty with the consciences of men is to be managed under divine inspection, under the eye of God.

And this being the import of the words considered in themselves; if also you consider them in their relation to

what goes before; so the import of the context, and of them, as they fall into it, will be most plain. In the close of the foregoing chapter, the Apostle having spoken above of the gospel ministration, as contra-distinguished to that of the law, and most highly excelling it in point of light, and in point of efficacy; both of them glorious things, and in respect whereof, he calls it the ministration of glory; so that, though that of mount Sinai was very glorious, yet this did so much excel it in glory, that the very glory of that was no glory, in comparison of the glory of this; for that by it, we, as in a glass (he so concludes the chapter) beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. That *as* is not *similitudinis* but *identitatis*; it doth not signify likeness, but sameness: that is, there is so transforming a work wrought by the glory of the Lord shining through the glass, as doth speak its author to be the Spirit; such a work is done as none but the Divine Spirit could do; so that any one might see there was such a transformation wrought, as by the Spirit of the Lord is wont to be wrought; the Spirit doth like itself, as itself, it works as a Divine Almighty Spirit might be expected to do in this case. This is the account which he gives of the ministry, wherein he was engaged.

Now, in the beginning of this next chapter, it runs thus; —having received such a ministry as this, (so apt and so animated to serve its proper end and purpose,) "as we have received mercy, we faint not;" he resolves the vigour, and fortitude, and undauntedness of his heart in this great work, that was put into his hands, into the nature and kind of this ministry wherewith he was intrusted; considered in its own aptitude to serve its end, as it was managed and replenished with power and efficacy from the Divine Spirit. Having such a ministry, we faint not, we go on with all vigour and resolvedness imaginable in our work. And, thereupon, renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty, we go on with open face, as being well assured we shall be owned in our work one way or another; and make it our business hereupon, to apply ourselves immediately and directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God. And these several things, upon the whole, may be observed and taken up for our instruction and use from this portion of scripture.

1. That the great things of the gospel, or of religion in

general, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men.

2. That the business of the faithful ministers of this gospel lies, first and most immediately, in a transaction with men's consciences about these things.

3. That this transaction with men's consciences about such things, is to be managed in the sight of God, under the inspection of the Divine Mind. And,

4. That thereupon, such as are engaged with uprightness and fidelity in this work, have the most vigorous and unfainting resolution and fortitude in it.

I begin with the first.

1st. Doctrine. That the great things of the gospel, or of religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Here,

1. It will be requisite to say somewhat concerning the principle of conscience. And,

2. Then to evince the truth of the assertion, that the great things of the gospel, or religion, do carry with them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences.

1. It is requisite to be said concerning conscience, thus much briefly; to wit, that it is a principle which is to be appealed to about such matters; and this doth, in the general notion of it, import an ability to judge, a certain dijudicative power. And it must be looked upon according to a double reference which it bears;—1st. To the matter which it is to judge about. And, 2ndly. To the Supreme Ruler under whom it is to judge, such things being to be judged of in the sight of God; for the latter of these references we shall come to speak to it under another observation: but for the former, we are to consider of it now.

Conscience, it doth import a power of judging, or an ability to judge about such and such matters; but what those matters are, we are more particularly to consider. In the general, it is matter of duty about which conscience is to judge; or such things in reference whereunto we are one way or other under obligation to do, or not to do. And so it is the actions of men, that conscience is to judge about; as they are measurable by laws and rules to which they are properly and truly obliged. And so our actions may be considered two ways—either as to be done, or as done. And they come under the judgment and cognizance of conscience, both ways—either as to be done, or as done; and so the judgment of conscience is two-fold, either con-

cerning things, or concerning ourselves; for conscience hath both its prospect and its retrospect:—its prospect, that is, as it is to see our way before us, and to judge for us, Am I to do this, or am I to do that, or am I to let it alone; and decline doing such and such things? Here is the prospect of conscience; it is to discern and make a judgment aforehand, concerning the way that we are to take, to see our way for us. And then it hath its retrospect; when we come to make a stand, and look back upon our former course in general, or upon this or that particular action, Have I done well, or have I done ill? have I held a strict and regular course? or have I made a wrong or false step?

Now for conscience under this latter notion; that is, for the retrospect of conscience, I have had occasion to speak to it at large, in the hearing of many of you, from another scripture, that of 2 Cor. i. 12. This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience;—here is the exercise of conscience in reference to what is past, in reference to a course transacted already. So that you may plainly see our present subject doth not lead us to consider conscience under that notion at all; but only to consider it according to its prospect, as it doth *prospicere.* As it looks forward to discern and make a judgment;—Is such a course to be taken? or are such and such things directed to be complied with, yea or no?

And so the matter of which conscience is to judge is of this kind; to wit, what we are to do, or our actions as they are future, or to be done, must be taken with a latitude; so as not barely or chiefly to concern our external actions, the actions of the outward man; no, nor merely or only to concern those actions of the inward man, that proceed immediately from the will, and from the affections, and from the executive power in the first rise of it; but also so as to comprehend, and take in too, the actions of the mind and understanding;—all this is within the compass of this matter, about which, conscience is to be exercised. We are not to consider what is to be done by the reflective faculty, but what is to be done by the directive faculty, the mind and understanding itself; that is, whether such and such things propounded to us, be to be assented to, yea or no. This is as much matter of conscience as any thing else; that is, the assenting or not assenting of our minds and understandings to such and such things; supposing they are things in reference whereunto we come under obliga-

tion; suppose that they are not such things wherein we are left at liberty to judge and think as we please, as we are in multitudes of theological speculations, wherein we are not laid under a law, as a main duty, to know, and understand, and observe, and mind such things. But this refers to such things wherein our giving our assent so and so, it is made matter of duty; or in reference whereunto, we are laid under an obligation. All that doth come as much within the compass of that matter, wherein conscience is to judge as any thing else: that is, these acts of our minds, which are to be exerted and put forth immediately there, as they are part of our duty, about which we are accountable at last; so they are matters of conscience, and in reference whereunto conscience must, and ought to have too, a present exercise before hand. Am I so or so to assent, or am I not? Thus, by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

And so much is all that we need to say concerning the former of these heads, the principle that is to be applied unto, and to which the things of religion do, by a self-recommending evidence, approve themselves.

2. The second thing we have to do, is to evince and clear this to you, that there is such a self-recommending evidence in the things of religion, by which they become approved, or do approve themselves to the very consciences of men. And here, that you may understand this aright, what it is that I am to prove and make out to you,—you are not to take it thus, as though every thing that lies within the compass of truth, and which we are accordingly to embrace and close with, were self-evident; so as at first sight it must necessarily beget a conviction in a man's judgment and conscience, that it ought to be entertained and closed with; that is not the meaning; every thing in religion that hath competent evidence with it, hath not that primary evidence as immediately, as soon, as it is heard and proposed, to command the mind to close in with it. But the meaning is this, that whereas there are some things of that kind that carry their own light so apparently in them as to captivate the mind into a present consent; there are many other things that are capable of being clothed with that light, or having that evidence added to them, by which they also may be enabled to recommend themselves. Every truth, is not a first truth; but there is nothing which God hath made it necessary to the salvation of our souls

to give entertainment unto; but that, if it be not evident in itself, it is capable of being so evidenced, as that it may, by that evidence (at least) that shall be added thereto, come to recommend itself to men's consciences, unless they be men so under the power of a vitious prejudice, and abandoned by God for their indulgence thereunto, that (as it follows in the next words) the gospel is only hid to them, because they are lost. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." And it is hid to them for having rebelled and sinned against the light of it so long; and this being the point, we come now to make it out to you, that the great things of religion, which we are to give entertainment to, as necessary to our final welfare and blessedness, they are things that carry with them such a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; they carry it with them, either as being primary self-evident truths, or as being capable of being evidenced by such things as are so; that is, either by their own light, or by such a light as may be imparted to them, and wherewith they may fairly admit to be clothed.

And the way of proving this, will be fittest and most proper, by giving instances; by instancing to you in divers of the most important things which we are required to give entertainment to, in order to our final salvation and blessedness;—and so to submit the matter to your own judgment, whether these things do not recommend themselves to conscience, yea or no; which is the best and most effectual way of proving any thing, when the inward sense of our mind is immediately directed to; we appeal to that immediately, so that you have the judgment in your own breast or bosom, concerning this or that thing. Is it not clear, doth it not speak itself in my own conscience?

And the instances I shall give, will be especially under these four heads;—to wit, 1st. Of Truths.—2ndly. Of Precepts.—3rdly. Of Prohibitions; and 4thly. Of Judgments.

1. Of Truths, you must understand that I am only going to give instances under each of these heads; otherwise, you must suppose that the whole body of theology would be the subject of our present discourse, as every thing would come in here that belongs to the substance of a theological treatise. And that (as I was saying) I may instance, first, in truths propounded to us, they will be of two sorts,—Positive and Argumentative;—Positive, those that we simply lay down; or Argumentative, those that in the way of argumentation may be annexed to the former,

either, first, as reasons to prove them; or, secondly, as inferences and deductions proved by them. And this order and reference, which one truth may have to another, we are not to understand it so, as if there must be constantly that methodical relation, or a relation in that method; for the relation may be transposed, according as this or that particular discourse may be. But I shall give you instances of these together, or as now they may be represented to relate to one another; and so shall briefly instance to you;—1st. In those truths that do concern the original of all things.—2ndly. That do concern the apostacy and fall of man.—3rdly. Some that do concern the redemption by the Son of God; and 4thly. Some that do concern the final issue of all things.

1. For those that do concern the original of all things, take these,

(1.) That this world, (look upon it as one system, one complexion,) it is all a made thing.

This whole universe, it is all a made thing; why sure, either this hath such light with it, that any conscience of a considering man must presently say, it is true, in my conscience it is true; or it will easily be made evident. It is one of the great things (as being of natural revelation) that is mightily insisted upon by philosophers, as fundamental to all things else. You find that so the Deity was proved by the apostle in that text we so lately insisted on, Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made;" by this whole entire scheme and frame of made things. "By faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. xi. 2. Thus largely too doth the apostle discourse the efficiency of the Creator, Acts xvii. in a very great part of that chapter. And so the account is given in the very beginning of that revelation of the mind of God to man contained in the Bible. Gen. i. 1. It begins with the beginning of all things. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And so too doth that gospel, John i. 1.2. wrote by the Evangelist John: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God: by him were all things made that were made." Now this is a matter that will let its light appear, if you will but revolve it a little in your minds, and think of it; for you manifestly see that all this world is full of changes; but there can be no change of a necessary Being; of a self-existing Being;

what exists necessarily, and of itself, must be always as it is; whence that goes for a maxim with all that have set themselves to consider, *Eternum non patitur novum:* That which is eternal, admits of no innovation, nothing of new in it. And the matter would yet carry more convictive and clearer evidence to those that are less apt or less used to the exercise of thoughts, if they would but bring it to their own case; that is, suppose it be told you in particular, you are a creature, you are a made thing; let this be said to any body that hath the use of the ordinary understanding of a man with him, and it presently strikes the conscience; it is very true, I, in my own conscience, judge it true, I am a made thing. If any should hesitate at it, do but take a turn or two in thinking, and the matter would strike you with fresh light again and again. Why, what? Do not ye know that you have been in being but a little while? It is but so many years ago, and you were not; no such one as you was heard of in the world. Whatsoever began to be, must be a made thing. You did but lately begin to be, it is plain then you have been made; for nothing could of itself begin to be, or arise out of nothing of itself. That strikes every man's conscience that considers. Do not you, in your consciences, think and judge, that if nothing were in being, nothing could ever be in being? It is impossible that any thing should arise up of itself out of nothing. Therefore, if you begin to be, you are a made thing. And then,

2ndly. There are truths that will belong to this, by way of revelation and deduction. As then,

(1.) You have a Maker; every made thing must have a maker; do not your consciences tell you that this is true? In my conscience this is true, if I be a made thing, then I must have a maker. And then, again,

(2.) You may collect what kind of maker that must be; what kind of thing am I? I said, (among other things belonging to me,) there is a power of thought belonging to me; I have then a spiritual intellectual nature belonging to me; and therefore, certainly, such excellencies as I have in me, and as I find the rest of the creation hath in it, must be in the Maker of them all, much more eminently, and much more transcendently. And, therefore, as the apostle speaks, when he had said from a pagan,—"In him we live and move, and have our being; and we are all his offspring;" he immediately subjoins. Acts xvii. 28, 29.

"For as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver and gold, or stone graven by the art of man." If there be such and such things that are the effects of an invisible divine power of the Godhead; that is, if there be intellectual and spiritual beings, then he must be such an one: and then we are no longer (saith the apostle) to amuse and mislead ourselves with the foolish misconceit of a golden deity, or of a wooden and stone deity. The deity must be such a being as hath such excellencies belonging to it, as we find are in his offspring. We find he hath an offspring of an intelligent and spiritual nature, and therefore, sure, such must he be. And again,

(3.) It will be further recollected, that if I am a made thing, a creature, and thereupon, have a maker, I have also an owner too, as well as a maker; he that made me, must be my owner and proprietor; and to him I must belong, and in his power I am; and I must be at his disposal; and he may do with me what he will, and I am to do with myself only what he will have me do. Doth this not also strike conscience? Doth not this approve itself to every conscience of man? Am I a made thing? Then he that made me, owns, and he is to use me as his own. And again,

(4.) Am I a made thing, and do therefore appear to have a maker, and to have an owner? Then I have a ruler too; one that is to prescribe to me, and give me laws; to tell me what I am to do, and what not, through the whole of my course. This speaks to every conscience of man; every man that will use conscience in the case, must needs say, In my conscience, this is true; it cannot but be true. And again,

(5.) If I have such a maker, one that is the author and original of my life and being to me; he that is the author, must be the end of it; he that is the first to me, must be the last also. I am a creature, and a made thing; I did not come of myself into the world; and what could not be by itself, must not be for itself. Will not any man's conscience say this is true? Is not conscience smitten with light in this case? Methinks this doth recommend itself to my very conscience. I, that could never have come by myself into this world; I must not live in it for myself; it is inconsistent with the state of a creature to be its own end. Thus, in this kind, you may find there are things that

concern the original of all things, that do by their own light recommend themselves to the consciences of men. And then,

2. Concerning the apostacy of man. To instance briefly therein man is a fallen creature; he is not in the state that was original to him or primitive, or wherein he was made. This, (one would think,) in the first speaking or hearing, should strike conscience with its own light; but if it should not with any that are more stupid and less considerate, let men but refer themselves to their own original state and nature, consider their nature abstract, and then compare themselves with what they may easily discern and find of their present state and case.

The most general consideration that you can have of, or concerning your own nature is, I am a sort of creature, that can think, that can use thoughts well; do but look to your present state, the common state of men according to that representation and description that is given us of it; "all the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil, and that continually." Gen. vi. 5. What? can any man imagine that God did make a thinking creature; endowed a creature with a power of thought, originally from the beginning, to think nothing but what was evil, and continually evil? And let but men see whether this be not a true account of themselves, that the scripture gave so long ago. If they would but inspect and look into themselves, would they not be inforced to say, Have I not thoughts full of vanity, full of earthliness, full of impurity, from day to day? And, unless they be imposed and thrust in upon me, am I not a stranger to serious thoughts, to divine thoughts, to heavenly thoughts? Therefore the matter will again strike conscience with its own light. I am not only a creature, but a fallen creature; sure God never made me such a creature as I am become, as I have made myself; a creature, endowed with so noble intellectual powers, to debase myself; to make so sublime a thing, as an intelligent immortal mind, perpetually to grovel in the dust, and enslave itself to sensual and brutal lusts, and to mean and base designs that time measureth; and to leave myself to sink and perish eternally at length; so that to this very soul and spirit, for want of being employed about a good suitable to itself, and means and methods of compassing that, nothing but misery can be its portion. The thing speaks itself; I am a fallen creature, and as long as this continues my posture, and the state and temper of my mind and spirit, I may see the

matter will issue ill at last. I am a degenerate creature, especially if it be considered how the stream and current of my thoughts and affections run out towards other things, as they stand in competition with the eternal, ever-blessed God; for can any man think God made a creature to despise himself? To neglect himself, and to prefer the most despicable vanities before himself, when he hath made him capable of knowing, minding, adoring, and serving him? Thence also it would be collected, I may hence judge, whether also my present state is a safe state, or a bad state. It is a lamentable thing to be a fallen creature, fallen from its pristine excellency; and it may easily be collected hence, it is an unsafe state; for if I am fallen low already, I am still liable to fall lower; and I cannot tell whether I may fall, how low I may sink, and what finally will become of me; for I am falling lower and lower all the while I am a stranger to God, and a vassal to sensual inclinations. And I here again appeal, doth not all this speak to conscience? And doth not every one find in himself somewhat to which all this doth approve itself, and commend itself; so that he must needs say, In my very conscience this is true? I cannot now run through what I have to say hereupon. Pause hereupon a little, and consider what this is like to come to at last. If a man do, in a stated continual course from day to day, and from year to year, run counter to the judgment of his own conscience; if he lives continually a rebel against conscience, (for that is to be a rebel against God too,) what will it come to? Oh! might that be but seriously considered of, sure it would be of use to us, to bring us to a suitable disposition to hear of other things that will be of the greatest following concernment to us, in order to our future and eternal welfare.

SERMON II.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

THAT which we have in hand of the several things observed to you from the text and context, is, That the great things of religion do carry with them a self-

* Preached January 18, 1690.

recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And we have shewn, first, what that principle is, here called conscience. And, secondly, have touched upon the proof of the assertion.

The principle itself which is to be applied and appealed to, was considered as to its prospect and retrospect. As to the former, it is the business of conscience to see before us, to discern the way we are to go. If a man do not, with good conscience, proceed in his way; if he go wavering, and with a suspenseful mind, and in continual doubt, shall I, in so doing, do right or wrong? Such an one can never steer his course acceptably to God, or comfortably to himself; and, according to its retrospect, conscience is to make a stand, look back upon the way that a man hath taken, and thereupon make its judgment; whether he hath done aright, or wrong, in either respect, conscience is to judge; to judge of practice both as to what is done, and what is to be done; and it is principally conscience, in reference to its prospect, that we have to do with it here; though it is one and the same principle that doth both; and the turn is quick and easy, from looking forward to what we are to do, to looking backward to see what we have done; and to see what may belong to us by way of reward, or by way of penalty hereupon.

And so we proceed to prove the assertion; and here again you were told, that both such things as are within the discovery of natural light, and which relate to religion; and such things too, as are super-naturally revealed one way or other, come to have this self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men; and this we proposed to prove to you, by some instances, upon which such an appeal is to be made to conscience itself, which is the clearest and most convictive way of proving any thing in the world; when we therein speak to the very inward sense of a man's own mind. And we propounded to give instances, under these four heads; to wit, of truths, of precepts, of prohibitions, and of judgments, or Divine determinations concerning what is due unto a person, as he is found complying, or not complying, with the divine preceptive will, in point of penalty or reward.

We did propose to give instances of truths which concern—1st. The beginning of all things.—2ndly. The apostacy of man.—3rdly. His redemption by Christ;—and 4thly. The final issue of all things. And as to the two

first of these, you had instances the last day. Now to go on,

3. To instance somewhat concerning the redemption of man by Christ; as that man, being in so lost and forlorn a condition, God did send his own Son down into this world to be a Redeemer and Saviour to him. This is a thing, not evident at first sight; it was not upon the first proposal discovered; it is not as soon as we hear it evident to any of us; but it may admit to be clothed with that evidence wherewith it must recommend itself to the consciences of such as shall consider. There is enough to make it plain, both who he was that came under the notion of a Redeemer into this world, and what he came for; that doing the part of a Redeemer, was really the design and end of his coming.

1. Who he was. That he was what he gave himself out to be, the Son of God; that he came down as a God, to dwell awhile in this world among men, having made himself like us, and become one of us. Though this, I say, was not evident at first view, there was enough to make it evident; that is, that he who was spoken of, under the name of the Son of God, a thousand years before he came, accordingly came about such a time which was foretold: any man that should consider it, must needs say, In my conscience this is so; this is the Son of God. Psalm ii. 6. "I will declare the decree, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." This was said one thousand years before he came: and whereas, it was so plainly said, he should come about such a time as he did, within the time of the second temple: and that he did appear under such a character as could agree to none but this very person; when he came, his glory immediately shone as "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John i. 14. It sparkled round about wherever he came, in whatsoever he spake, in whatsoever he did. We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father: this could be no other but the Son of God; this could not but speak itself; and this still cannot but speak itself in the consciences of those that do consider; and that he afterwards was testified unto, by a voice from heaven, from the excellent glory, again and again, in the hearing of a competent number, and at some other time, of very numerous witnesses;—This is my Son, my beloved Son, hear him; I recommend him to you, I set him over you, I make him arbiter of all your affairs; attend him, submit to him,

(hearing him imports so much.) This must speak in every conscience of considering men: this is very true, that he must be the Son of God! He that wrought such wonders in the world; restoring (upon all occasions as they occurred to him) hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, soundness to the maimed, and life to the dead, even by a word speaking: all these things being purposely recorded, that we might know that this Jesus was Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing, we might have life through his name. John xx. 31. He certainly was the Son of God. Here is sufficient evidence that doth speak the thing to any man's conscience that doth consider;—yea, he that did display such beams of His Majesty and Glory, living in flesh, that even the devils themselves were constrained to do him homage, under that notion, "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" surely this must tell any man's conscience, this cannot but be so, it must be so; he, whose death in the circumstances of it, (the sun darkened, the earth shaken, the graves opened,) extorted an acknowledgment from that Pagan Captain; "Verily, this is the Son of God:" He that afterwards was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the spirit of holiness that raised him from the dead; upon all this, the matter speaks itself to the consciences of considering men;—this cannot but be the Son of God. And then,

2. That this great Person, this glorious Person, should die (as we know he did) upon a cross; that certainly speaks the end of his coming into the world, as a Redeemer; it could not be that one who was so plainly demonstrated to be the Son of God, should die for his own fault, or otherwise, than by his own consent, when it had been the easiest thing in the world to him to have avoided that fate, of dying like a malefactor on a cross. He had legions of angels at his command, and ways enough to have warded off the blow: it was neither by his default, nor without his consent, that he did die; this speaks itself evidently to every conscience of man. Then what was it for? It could be upon no other account than to redeem and save lost sinners; so that the design is thus generally evident; that is, is capable of being evidenced, made evident to any conscience of man that doth consider; and more especially, that he died to procure the pardon of sin for poor sinners; died that they might be exempted and saved from the necessity of dying, that is, eternally: and that he died to recover men from under the power of sin, nothing is in

itself more evident, if you consider this in the place wherein it stands, and which belongs to it in the series of gospel doctrine: that is, it can never be, that so great, so wise, so holy a person as the Son of God was, should die to procure pardon for men, and yet leave them slaves to lust and sin. It is evident to every conscience of man, that if he died to save sinners, he died to sanctify, as well as pardon them, and that he was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins both together. Acts v. 31. That his dying could not but have that design; that "he bare our sins in his body on the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." 1 Peter ii. 24. Being healed, by his stripes, of the wounds, and distempers, and diseases, that infested our spirits; and this all carried so much evidence with it, that (as the apostle saith to the Galatians) they must be bewitched, that do not see and look into the inmost verity that lies in such truth; the very inwards of that truth. There is a centre of truth, a centering of truth, and if you do not refer the beams of that truth to the centre they proceed from, truly they are insignificant little things, and as little capable of subsisting apart, as the beams of the sun would be, cut off from the sun. You must make a rational design of this whole business, suitable to the wisdom of a Deity, and suitable to the vast comprehension of a Divine mind, or you do nothing. Then, I say, look upon these things as they do refer to one centre and juncture of Divine truth; and all runs into this, That Christ died upon this account, and with this design, that he might pardon and transform men together; that he might pardon them and renew them; pardon them and make them new creatures; pardon them, and divest them of the old man, and put on them the new man; for can any considering conscience of man admit the thought, that he died for sinners to procure them pardon, leaving them enemies to God as they were; leaving them with blind minds as they were; leaving them with natures poisoned with enmity and malignity against the Author of their beings as they were, and yet design these persons to blessedness? That were, to design an impossible thing; to design that man, or that sort of men, to a blessed state in heaven, that have at the same time, an hell within them. One that hath not an holy nature, hath hell within him. This speaks itself to any conscience of man that doth but consider;—do but think, and you must say, In my conscience it must be so; so that, if any do not subject their

souls to the design of that gospel that hath revealed this to them; it may be said to them, Oh! foolish creatures, that you should not believe this truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you; (Gal. iii. 1.) that have had such a representation of a crucified Christ, and never made it your business to know for what,—what was the design of it. I pray what did it finally aim at, but to Christianize the world, so far as his design should extend and have its effect? That is, to turn them into the image of that Christ, that was crucified for them; to make them pure, and holy, and heavenly creatures, and devoted to God as he was. And as the apostle adds here,—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" if so plain a gospel as this, that carries such evidence with it to the consciences of men, cannot yet be understood, it shews what a dreadful character these souls lie under; these must be struck with a penal blindness, and with a diabolical blindness withal, which is equivalent with this phrase of being bewitched; "in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not," as the next words are in the 4th verse of this chapter.

And so much, therefore, concerning the design of redemption by the Son of God, who came down into this world upon this account, may be represented with that evidence, as to command any conscience of man that considers, into an assent: This cannot but be so, in my conscience this is so. And then,

4. Concerning the final issue of all: there is such truth shining, as must needs strike conscience, if it be attended to; it is clothed with that evidence, or easily admits to be, as must overpower the consciences of men into an assent. As,

1. Concerning the final issue of things; that this present state of things shall have an end. Any body that considers, cannot but say, in my very conscience it cannot but be so, it must be so: things are not to run on always sure as they now do. This state and posture of things certainly is not to be eternal; for is it a likely thing, that God will perpetuate his own dishonour, that he will have the generations of men in a continual succession to rise up one after another, full of alienation and estrangement from the Author of their being, and always to live upon the earth, while they live, to no other purpose than to express their contempt of him that gave them breath? Will not this have an end? Sure any conscience of man must need say, This

state of things will have an end. 1 Peter iv. 7. So that when this truth is spoken to us; "The end of all things is at hand," is approaching; (to that fore-seeing Spirit, that spake those words, and whose breath they were, the end of all things is at hand, just at hand;) there is no conscience of man that allows itself to think, but must think so it will be, and this state of things cannot last always: though we are taught that while things do continue thus, it is with design, and it is from patience; and that design shall be accomplished, and that patience must have its limits and bounds. We are told it is not from negligence, but from patience; it is not that God doth neglect or disregard the state of things; it is not from supine ossitancy, but divine patience. Why, in my very conscience, this is true, must every one say that considers; He that hath made such a world as this, and been the immediate Author of such a sort of intelligent creatures in it, who are to have immediate presidence and dominion here in this present lower world; it is not to be imagined that he doth neglect the creatures that he hath made, and made after his own image; stamped with his own likeness; it is not likely he should be indifferent how they live, what they do, and what their posture and dispositions towards him are: any man that thinks, must needs say this is very true, it is God's patience, not his negligence, that such a sort of creatures are so long, from age to age, suffered to inhabit this world, and breathe upon this earth. Therefore, when it is told us from the divine word, "The Lord is not slack concerning the promise of his coming, as some men count slackness; but is patient and long suffering towards sinners, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Peter iii. 9.) such truth, when it is laid before us, is so con-natural, so agreeable to the very conscience of man, that he must say, This sure is true, it falls within my mind; my mind gives it, it cannot be from negligence, or unconcernedness; but from wise designing patience, that things run on in this course so long. And then, again,

2. This cannot but be evident concerning the end of all things, to those that consider, that sure their end will be glorious, suitable to their glorious beginning and glorious Author; that God will, in putting an end to things so like himself, and so, as it is worthy of God, there is no doubt but he will: any conscience of man must needs say so. God will do at length like himself; men have done all

this while like themselves; they, like men, have transgressed, and perpetuated, to their utmost, their rebellions in this world against their rightful Lord; thus they have been in all things while doing like men; and God will at length do like God, no doubt but he will. There can be in him no variableness, nor shadow of turning; His nature alters not; He is the I Am, and is what he is; and, therefore, there will be an issue of all things, that will demonstrate, to all apprehensive creatures, the glory of the great Lord of heaven and earth; even to the highest, and in ways most suitable to himself; that is, it shall go well with all that have been sincere lovers of him—devoted to him, studious to please him; that valued his favour, and despised it not as the most do; but for the rest, this world, the stage of their wickedness, where they have been sinning from age to age, is reserved on purpose for the perdition of ungodly men; and reserved unto fire for that end and purpose. 2 Peter iii. 7. That things will end thus, as to all those that know not God, and were in conspiracy against him and his Messiah; saying, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Psalm ii. 3. And that never turned, never made their peace; that the day that comes for them, it must be to consume them in the common ruin, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all things therein be consumed and burnt up; for this world is reserved unto fire, for the perdition of ungodly men, as we see the expressions are. 2 Peter iii. 7. And thus are they to have their perdition in those flames, that is, that the fire of the Almighty, which will at last catch hold of this world, whereby the heavens shall be shrivelled up as a scroll, and pass away with great noise; then it will be seen, that both ways God hath done like himself; he hath done suitably to an excellent, great, and glorious majesty, long despised by the work of his own hands.

Now, when these things come to be represented, they do carry in them that evident appearance of verity and truth, that more than very similitude, that every conscience of man must say, These things are very agreeable to truth, cannot but be true. There is a con-naturalness between the soul of man and truth, between the mind of man, the conscience of man that is to judge of truth, so that any must say that consider, It cannot but be thus; in my very conscience it will be so. Then to go on,

2. To the next head, that of precepts; wherein, as in reference to the former, it was the business of conscience to discern of truth and falsehood; so in reference to this, it will be the business of conscience to discern of right and wrong; but here we shall only mention those two great comprehensive precepts,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and with all thy mind, and shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37. Precepts (as our Herbert said of them) as dark as day; having no more of darkness in them, than is in the brightest day, or the clearest light. What? do not these approve themselves to every conscience of man? that He who is most good, and contains in himself all excellency, all perfection, all glory, all blessedness; and which he is ready to communicate to receptive capable subjects, should be loved by me with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my might, and with all my mind; for in my heart and conscience, it ought to be so, any conscientious man will say.

And then, that he whom God hath set in a certain order and rank as a fellow creature; a creature of the same order, having the same nature that I have, and the same natural capacities, both as to knowledge and enjoyment, should be loved by me as myself: Do not my fellow creatures of the same order deserve as much love as I do deserve? And, therefore, can it be a reasonable thing that I should cut off myself from the community to which I do belong? That order of creatures in which I am and live, only within a private course of my own, apart from the rest of mankind? It cannot be, I must love my neighbour as myself; whatsoever there can be in my nature, that must draw and attract love, must be in them that have the same nature, that have the same capacities that I have; so that every one that considers, must say, this is true, even to the light and sense of my own conscience; thus it ought to be; this is the very right of the case; and he that laid this law upon me, doth by this law require no more than the very nature of the thing requires.

But then considering that apostate, lapsed creatures cannot arrive hither to this loving of God above all, with all the heart, all the soul, all the might and mind; neither can there be that redintegration of kind dispositions and affections, mutually towards one another, that is required in that other precept; having all lapsed and fallen, without

a reparation and renewal of their frames, without having their frame repaired towards God and towards one another; this makes the Gospel necessary to come in, in reference to fallen lost creatures. This was the original duty of man, and still is incumbent upon him as a just duty; but he cannot come at it till there be a reparation and renewal of his nature; and for this the gospel (as was hinted) doth contain prescriptions, or a proscribed course. Now as to God, the gospel runs upon duty, suitably to our lost state, under two heads,—Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; this law lying with its eternal invariable obligation upon all intelligent nature, upon every reasonable creature,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—Aye, so I ought, saith conscience, but I have not done it, I have been a rebel against him; a thing very inconsistent with dutiful love. I have been a stranger and an alien to him, alienated from the life of God; a very inconsistent thing with communion love, with conversible love. What then is to be done? here is no returning to my duty and pristine state again, for a fallen creature, for one that hath degenerated and been in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, (as I have been,) but by Repentance. I can never come to love again till I repent. Here is that, therefore, which the gospel does injoin in the first place,—Repentance towards God. I was under an obligation to him, as I was the work of his hands; and as a reasonable creature, I was to love him with all my heart, soul, might, and mind, and I have been a rebel to him, and an enemy against him; but through his grace I repent of it; I repent of it with all my heart, and with all my soul. And by repentance, it is, that the soul is to return into the exercise of this vast all-comprehending love, towards the all-comprehending good; it comprehends all our duty towards him, who comprehends in himself all excellencies, majesty, glory, and felicity. Now will not any considering man's conscience say to this, It cannot but be so; that he who was under so natural an obligation to love God with all his heart, soul, might, and mind; and hath been disloyal, an enemy, and false to him, and a rebel against him, ought to repent of it? In my very conscience he ought; every man that considers will say so. What? Have I been a traitor to him that gave me breath, and shall I not repent of it? or doth that gospel enjoin me a wrongful thing that calls me to repentance? And shall I not be a vile creature if, being so called, I will never repent;

but bear within me an impenitent heart, an heart than cannot repent, as that fearful expression is, Romans ii. 14? The words carry that in them, which may affright a congregation, and strike the hearts of all that hear them with terror. An heart that cannot repent! A heart that could sin, that would offend and affront God, but that cannot repent; repentance is hid from it! To the sense of any man's conscience, this is an horrid creature that hath been an offender all his days, but will never repent. The gospel calls him to repentance; the gentle alluring voice of the gospel; but he will not repent. This carries evidence with it to the consciences of men, what there is of right, and what there is of wrong, in this matter.

And so for Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, doth not the thing carry evidence with it to the consciences of men, That he who is to make up (upon such terms as you have heard) that which otherwise must have been an everlasting breach between God and the sinner, should not have the soul, when called thereto in the gospel, and being now in its return to God, take him in its way, and pay a dutiful homage to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of lost souls, to be to them a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins? But in order thereunto, here it must be begun, for the poor soul thus to own him in the high authority of his office. This is the homage, which is in sum, the meaning of faith in Christ; the paying deference to him whom God hath set over all the affairs of souls; that is, by resigning themselves up to him: that is the homage that you owe him. And herein lies the substance of faith,—gospel-faith, self-resignation, a self-surrender, whereby you put yourselves absolutely into the hands of Christ, and own his high authority, as he is a Prince and a Saviour. And is not this the most reasonable thing in all the world? Doth not every conscience of man say so when he considers, If ever I will be reconciled to God, it must be by the blood of Christ: and he hath an office over this lost world, founded in his blood? And shall I not come and pay my deference to him at the footstool of that throne which God hath set up for him? When he hath said to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," shall not I come and pay my homage to this Son of God, at that throne? (Psalm iv. 5.) the Redeemer's throne; and say, Lord, being now convinced of this state of my case, and being reduced to this, to bethink myself of returning to God, and I know there is no coming at him,

but by thee; and this throne is set up in the way for returning souls; I therefore come and pay my homage at this throne; that is, I come and resign my soul, give up myself, put myself into thy hands to be under thy conduct: thou didst die the just for the unjust to bring them unto God; and now I come to thee to be brought, I submit to thy authority, I commit myself to thy grace. This is faith, gospel faith, and can any thing more approve itself to the conscience, than the right and equity of doing so? Is it not a righteous thing, and a just thing, that this law should be laid upon returning sinners? If you go to God immediately,—No, saith he, go and do homage to my Son; there is no coming to me, but in him; and when you do so, when you thus receive the gospel, take hold of the gospel covenant, take him for Lord and Christ, and resign and give up yourselves. This sums up that duty, and the subservient duty of repentance towards God, as the way that leads to the end. And see now, whether the gospel of our Lord, both as to the truths of it, and as to the precepts of it, do not carry with it a self-recommending evidence unto the consciences of men.

SERMON III.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 2.

Commending ourselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God.

THE matter is in itself so obvious, that this self-recommendation is not thus spoken of the persons, personally considered, but with reference to their work of dispensing the gospel of Christ, and holding forth the great things contained in it: that that laid our ground fairly enough in view, for that which I mainly intended to insist upon from these words, and that is,

That the great things of religion do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. And here, having shewn you what is meant by conscience, what that principle is that is to be applied unto, appealed unto, in this work of ours; we come to evince to you the

* Preached, January 25, 1690.

truth of the thing, that there is that self-recommending evidence in the great things of religion, even to the very consciences of men. We propounded, (as you know,) to prove it by instances, and we have proved it,

1. By instances under the head of truths, or the doctrines unto which assent is to be given; and we have proved it.

2. By instances under the head of precepts, duties, enjoined to be done;—and now we shall farther prove it.

3. By instancing in prohibitions of sin to be avoided; and in them you will find the same recommending evidence to men's consciences, if such prohibitions, as do but come under your notice, be considered a little; as that general one, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate." (Jer. xliv. 4.) What convictive light doth it carry to every conscience of man, that allows himself to think and consider? I, a creature, the work of God's own hand, in whose power and pleasure it was, whether I should ever be or not be, whether ever I should draw a breath, or see the light in this world, yea or no; that I being lately sprung into being, by his pleasure and vouchsafement, should allow myself despitefully to do the thing he hates, and that he hath declared himself to hate? How can this, (if men do think,) how can it but strike conscience? What? to spite the God of all grace; Him, whose nature is love itself, goodness itself, kindness? For me to do the thing that I know he hates, how is it possible but this should recommend itself to conscience, if men do not shut the eye and stop the ear of conscience, that it shall not be allowed to discharge any part of its proper office and work?

But to descend to more particular prohibitions, there the thing will be still plain; do not live after the flesh, if you do, it is mortal to you; "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." (Rom. viii. 13.) What evidence doth this carry with it to conscience? Take the prohibition and the inforcement together, as we should do in the former instances; Do not this, do not the thing I hate. When we do know ourselves to be a sort of compound creatures, made up of flesh and spirit, can we be ignorant which is the nobler part? Can any man's conscience allow him to think, that flesh ought to rule; that it belongs to the baser flesh to be the governing thing? "Do not walk after the flesh;" doth not the thing carry its own evidence with it, that we should not; that the mind and spirit should not be enslaved to so base a thing as flesh?

Again, "Do not grieve the Spirit of God, do not quench

the Spirit; (1 Thess. v. 9.) What evidence doth this carry with it to any conscience of man? Our own hearts tell us, if we consider, we need a guide in this wilderness; we need an enlightener, we need a sanctifier, we need a quickener, we need a comforter within, an internal one of all these. What? Is it reasonable to think; doth not the matter speak itself to our consciences; when it is said to us, whatsoever ye do, do not grieve the Spirit? (Eph. iv. 3.) You are lost if you do; what desolate creatures will ye be if you do! What forsaken wretches! You will run yourselves into a thousand miseries and deaths, if you be forsaken of that Spirit; your end can be nothing but perdition, if you be not under the constant conduct of that Spirit. I might preach to you thus, upon as many several texts as I give you instances in this case, to shew the truth of this one thing, how God doth speak to men's consciences in the gospel-dispensation.

When again he saith to men, love not this world, nor the things of this world; If any man man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; (1 John ii. 15.) that is, do not so love this world, as thereby to stifle, as thereby to exclude the love of God, that it shall and can have no place in you. Doth not this carry its own light with it, its own evidence? What a foolish wretch art thou that thinkest this world can be to thee, in the room and stead of God! Can this world be a God to thee? Can this world fill up God's vacant places? What a pitiful sorry God wilt thou find it in a few years or days? Thou who dost turn God out of thy soul, and wilt have it filled and replenished only with this world, doth not this carry with it conviction to conscience? What can, if this do not?

Again, do not take more care for this temporal life, than for spiritual and eternal life; or to give it you in the words of our Saviour, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that which endureth to life eternal, which the Son of Man shall give." John vi. 27.

Doth not this carry its own evidence to you with it? That is, when I know I have but a short temporal life; which, do what I can, will soon come to an end; and there is an eternal state of life which must come afterwards. I know I am a creature made for eternity, and for an everlasting state. Doth not this carry its own evidence with it, when I am forbid to take more care for this mortal life, than for life eternal? When I am forbidden to make

more solicitous provision for this perishing life, than an immortal life? Doth not the reason of the thing speak itself in my conscience? But I go on,

4. To the last head which I proposed to give instances of. We have gone upon divine truths, divine precepts, divine prohibitions; we shall only instance further, upon the head of divine judgments, or judicial determinations. I cannot call what I intend by a fitter name, or nearer to that of the apostle, who knowing the judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death,—here is the divine judicial determination, *de debito retributionis*, what is justly to be retributed to those that are found to disobey the stated known rules of his government. His judgments in this sense, they are a light that goeth forth; Hosea vi. 5. (to borrow that expression;) they carry their own convictive evidence with them to the consciences of men. Hosea vi. 5. How equal they are! take those two in the general, that we have confronted to one another. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings; Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isaiah iii. 10, 11. Doth not this speak itself, that when we know the world is divided into good and bad, into righteous and wicked, it should fare ill with them that did ill, and well with them that did well? Doth not this carry its own evidence with it to conscience, that God should render to every man according to his works; that is, the course of his work, and, consequently, the habitual inclinations from whence they proceed; every thing working as it is, and men working, as they are, either according to what by nature they were, or according to what by grace they are become; so they ought to be judged? When we know the world is divided into two parts, under two great parents, as the apostle calls them the children of God, and the children of the devil, herein are the children of God manifest, and the children of the devil. 1 John iii. 10. These two families, these two sorts of posterities, do divide the world to every man's sense, and the world being so divided, is it to be expected that God should deal with his own children and the devil's children alike? Let conscience be appealed to in this case: they that live here all their days in this world under the law, and according to the dictates of the prince of the darkness of this world, despising God, hating his ways, throwing him out of their thoughts, making it only their design to please themselves, and do the devil's

work, when we know there is such a sort of men in this world, and that there is another sort that have given up themselves to God in Christ, have taken hold of Christ and of God in him, to be theirs; being born, "not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" (John i. 13.) as all they that do receive Christ are. When we know, I say, there is such a contradistinction between a race and a race, a family and a family, can any man in his conscience expect that God should deal with all alike? And therefore, when you have particular determinations to the particular distinguishing characters of the one sort, and of the other, the equity and reasonableness of the determination cannot but speak itself in every man's conscience that doth consider the case. As, for instance, the love of Christ: it is determined on the one hand; "Grace be upon all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Ephes. vi. 21. And, on the other hand, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) an execrable thing, an accursed thing, till the Lord come to plead his own cause and quarrel himself. To what conscience of man doth not the equity of this determination or distinguishing judgment appear and recommend itself? What! do we think (when men must have their final felicity from the blessed Judge, if ever they be happy) that he is to dispense equally to them that love him, and to them that hate him? And so, when the business of obedience to his gospel, the laws of his kingdom, is mentioned as the contradistinguishing character to that of disobedience and rebellion. He will be "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," Hebrews v. 9; and will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that obey him not. 2 Thess. i. 8. Doth not this distinguishing judgment approve itself to any man's conscience? That when every man must be beholden for this salvation to Christ the eternal Son of God, into whose hands and power this world is put, the whole universe, indeed, all the affairs of heaven and earth; do you think he will make no difference at the last between them that obeyed him, subjected themselves to that vast just power of his; and they that lived in continual rebellion against him, and defiance to his power and authority?

And so, if we should take the determination which is given us, concerning the stated method of God's final procedure in that which is called the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment; to wit, that to them

who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life; (Rom. ix. 7.) such as, by patient continuance in well doing, do steer their course answerable to so high an hope and expectation of honour, glory, and immortality, said God: nothing but eternal glory and blessedness will answer the enlargedness of the capacity, desires, and aspirings, of these souls; they shall have their seeking. These are a sort of souls that breathe after nothing but the celestial glory and felicity, being refined from the mixture, dross, and baseness, of this earth: no terrene good will satisfy them, or serve their turn; for they are all for heaven, all for glory, and immortality: I will give them eternal life. This is the judgment that is made aforehand; eternal life shall be theirs. But then there is another sort, that are contentious, and will not obey the truth; Rom. ii. 8, 9. that is, that are contentious against the truth they should obey, and that should govern them: no, they will not be governed by truth; they will be governed by lust, by terrene inclinations, which bear them downwards towards this earth: "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man: it will be upon them, every soul of them, that do evil, whether Jew or Gentile; because there is no respect of persons with God, Romans ii. 11. What can more approve itself to the judgment of conscience than this determination doth? Yea, God hereupon makes his appeal to men: Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 25—29. Be you, your very conscience itself, in the judgment seat, and let that pronounce, Are not my ways equal? what conscience of man but must submit here, and fall in with the choir of them that say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways." Rev. xv. 3. There is nothing to be said against all this; every conscience of man must yield and submit to God in this case.

It remains to say somewhat by way of use.

1. We learn hence, that upon the whole, there cannot but be much sinning against light in this world; and especially under the gospel, where there are those so clear, evident, and convictive things, that are insisted upon so much from time to time, which even make their own way to men's consciences; though through them they do not make their way to their more abstracted hearts. Do but appeal to yourselves; what are the things that you hear of in these assemblies from one Lord's day to another? Are they not the

things as I have now given you instances in, and in former discourses? Do not you hear of such things most? And do not these things speak themselves in your very consciences? Yet, is it not apparent that the course and tenor of men's lives run counter to the tendency of all these things? Oh, then, how apparent and insolent sinning against light is there among us in our days! A fearful thing to think of! that men should in their consciences know that such and such things are true; and that, if they be true, they must be considerable; if they be true, they are as important truths as can be thought of; and yet they will not think of them. They know such and such things are commanded; but they never set themselves about them. Such and such things are forbidden, but they take no care to avoid them. Such and such judgments are fixed and determined by the righteous will of God, and they take no care; have no forethought to make a title clear to the reward that is promised, or to avoid the penalties threatened. What sinning against light is all this? And what is the issue of all this like to be?

2. You may further see hence, that if man be so capable a creature, through his having that principle settled in him of judging of things; to wit, truths, precepts, prohibitions, divine determinations, or judgments, as you have heard, then he is as capable a creature, by the same principle, of judging of himself, and of his own case hereupon. I pray consider it, it is one and the self same principle by which I am first to judge, Is such a thing a part of divine truth, and to be received accordingly? and afterwards to judge, Have I received it accordingly; yea or no? And so, in reference to the other several heads, it is but the same principle that I am to use, and put in exercise, both ways. If I am a creature capable of judging of truth, of duty, of sin, of desert in general; then I am capable of judging somewhat of the state of my own case hereupon, in reference to all these. And pray let that be considered only in the way to what is further to be considered.

3. It is, then, a very strange kind of stupidity, that men do not more generally lay themselves under judgment, one way or another, when they have this principle in them, that is so capable of doing, and the proper direct use whereof (at least) is to do it. It is strange that men should spend all their days amidst the light by which they must be finally judged, and never go about such a thing as the forming of a preventive judgment concerning themselves. And

yet we are told that this is the only way of escaping the severity of a destructive doom at last from the supreme Judge. "Judge yourselves, and ye shall not be judged." That people should pass away their days, and under a gospel, and never find time (as it is, God knows, with too many) to ask themselves the question, Into what sort and class of men am I to cast myself? There are those that do belong to God as his own children, the members of his family, his special domestics. Am I of that family, or am I not? Do I belong to God, or do I not? Do the characters of a righteous person or a wicked one belong to me? Am I one that fears God, or one of them that fear him not? That love him, or that love him not? Am I (in short) a regenerate person, or an unregenerate? A convert, or an unconverted one? It is strange how men can dream away their time under a gospel as we live, and never ask themselves such questions as these are, in reference to so great and important a case; let one day come and go after another, and take it for granted that things are well, without ever inquiring. To what purpose, I pray, is there such a principle in the souls of men as conscience, when this signifies nothing? It is thus tied and chained up from doing any thing of its proper business in their souls. If it be brought into true light, (as it may be with some, if their case do infer so,) it will speak comfortably to them, if their case doth admit it. But if you have no converse with your own consciences, have nothing to do with them, never converse with them, never commune with them, they never speak to you one way or other; you have neither comfort from them, nor are awakened by them. But again,

4. We further note to you, that sure, upon the whole matter, man is become a very degenerate creature. The state of things with men living under the gospel, gives so much the more clear and certain judgment of the state of things with men more generally and indefinitely considered; for if they that live under the gospel, notwithstanding the clearer representation of things there which are of the greatest concernment to them, and the most earnest inculcation of such things by them who have that part incumbent on them to open and preach the great things of the gospel among them; I say, if among these there be so deep a somnolency, the spirit of a deep sleep poured out; if even these men are generally unconcerned, and do not care what becomes of their souls, and what the state of things is between God and them, certainly, upon the whole mat-

ter, man must needs be a very degenerate creature, to have such a principle of conscience in him to so little purpose, so much in vain, which was designed in his original and instituted state to be his guide and conductor all along through the whole of his course; but now-a-days it doth not, for the most part, or at least not in reference to men's greatest concernment, the state of their affairs and case God-ward, and as things lie between them and him. And again,

5. We may learn wherein the degeneracy of man doth generally and principally consist and lie, and what is the most mortal ail and evil that hath befallen men by the fall; that is, the interruption and breach of the order between the faculties, that which should lead and guide, and those which should obey and follow: here lies the principal maim and hurt of the soul by the fall; it lies in this chiefly, that the order is battered and broken between faculty and faculty, between the practical judgment (which is the same with conscience) and the executive power, which should act and do according to the dictate of that judgment or conscience: here is the maim; it doth not lie so much in this, a mere ignorance, or (suppose that) in a mere inaptitude to know, or an incapacity of knowing the things that are needful to be known; but it lies chiefly in this, that the things we do know, they signify no more with men, than if they knew them not; the inferior powers do not obey and follow the superior: as, for instance, now, among us, who believe the Bible to be the word of God, and who do profess the Christian name, take a man that is under the dominion of this or that particular lust in his nature, it is plain this lust carries him against a thousand texts of scripture; what will a text of scripture signify to a man that is under the violent hurry or impetuosity of a lust? Though conscience tells him, at the same time, this is a divine word, a divine dictate; this word is from God, and it speaks like itself in my conscience, that it is a divine word. Alas! how little doth a text, or multitudes of texts of scripture, prevail in such a case, when a man's heart is carried by the power of such a lust? "The lusts of your fathers ye will do," (John viii. 44.) as our Saviour told the Jews; so that is the true state of man's case, naturally: a degenerate creature he is; and herein lies his degeneration, or principal maim, that he hath got by his fall; the order is broken between the faculties, insomuch, that now a man's knowing, or having the notion of this or that thing to be done,

or not to be done, signifies no more to him, than if there were no such notions, no such knowledge; when there is a competition between the judgment of conscience, and an inclination of heart, you may lay a thousand to one on the side of the inclination, that carries it: here is our maim, and it is fit we should understand, and needful we should consider, where it is, and what is our hurt by the fall: we see our way, but have no inclination to go in it; we see what we should do, but we do not do it; like here in the poet,—"*Video meliora proboque deteriora sequar;*"—the same maim that Pagans have complained of, I see the better, and do the worse. It were a sad case if we should lie under such a evil as this is, and never know it, never take notice of it, where our hurt lies, and where our cure must be wrought. And that is the next thing,

6. I would infer, to wit, wherein regeneration most principally lies: when a man understands what it is to be degenerate, he will the better know what it is to be regenerate; it must lie in this, in the exalting the law of the mind into its proper dominion and government, the placing that upon the throne which is to beget a man, spirit of spirit; whereas, before, he was only begotten flesh of flesh; for when flesh is a ruling and governing nature, then the man is called flesh; but when the spirit is become the ruling and governing thing, (which is the new nature,) then he is called spirit; and he is made spirit before he ought to be called so. And this is the effect of regeneration, the creating of a man's spirit again, that is restoring him to himself. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." John iii. 6. When a man's light becomes a vital thing, a powerful efficacious thing, then he is a child of light. "You were darkness, now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light." Ephes. v. 8. And we are never to look on ourselves as regenerate, till it comes to this; till the Divine Spirit have exalted our spirits into their proper dominion; till there be a principle begotten that shall make divine discoveries significant; when it may be said, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Romans viii. 2. And thereupon we may infer,

7. That a degenerate and an unregenerate man is a miserable creature; as he is a most depraved creature, so he is a most wretched creature; for, take the state of his case, as things are with the unregenerate man, his soul is the

seat and stage of a continual war, to no purpose. Indeed, the soul of a saint in this world is the seat of war, but it is a war to a good purpose; a war wherein he finally prevails, and wherein he is habitually victorious all along. But the soul of an unregenerate man is the seat of war in vain; for the right principle is always worsted, perpetually worsted; there is not a war as there is in the regenerate, in the faculties taken separately and apart, as in the very heart itself, and in the will itself. The regenerate person hath a war; there is a love to God, with its opposite; but that love is the prevailing inclination: there is faith with unbelief; but then faith is habitually prevailing in the regenerate person. In the unregenerate person there is no such thing as faith in the heart, love in the heart; but a total unbelief, a total enmity, and total fearlessness of God, and a total vacancy of desire after him, and delight in him; but there is light in his conscience: his conscience tells him God is worthy to be loved, worthy to be desired, worthy to be delighted in, but there is nothing in his heart correspondent, so that this soul is a continual seat of war, in vain, and to no purpose; for the bent of his heart always carries it against the light of his mind and conscience; so that, although he doth acknowledge in his conscience that God is the chief good, he always keeps off from him; that he is the highest authority, yet he always disobeys him; never fears him, never stands in awe of him; as such, therefore, this sort of creature is a miserable creature, he is a creature composed for torment, having a principle in him that always tells him what he should do, but no principle to enable him so to do; so that continually he doth against what he should do. This is as much as is possible to be made for torment; but then remember, it is self-composed; you have made yourselves so: if this be the case with any of us, we have fought against the grace and Spirit of Christ, by which this sad case should have been redressed: and we have habituated ourselves to a course of living after the flesh, by which flesh hath got dominion over conscience; whereupon conscience can never come to rule it, but dictates to it always in vain. Again,

8. They are very happy souls in whom there is a reconciliation brought about between the light of their consciences and the temper and inclination of their hearts, by the conforming of the latter to the former. This creates an heaven within them, when a poor soul sees its way, and walks in it; sees that God ought to be loved, and he loves

him; that he ought to be trusted, and trusts in him; that he ought to be delighted in, and delights in him: this is heaven on this side heaven, this is heaven under heaven, when conscience is the governing thing in his whole conversation; so that he doth not consider, Wherein shall I advantage myself by this and this negociation and affair? increase my estate and my condition in this world? He doth not, finally, and ultimately, consider that, but how shall I manage this affair to please God, so as I may approve myself to him, and so as that my own heart and conscience shall not reproach me about it? O happy man that walks by this rule! This is the new creature's rule; they that walk according to it, peace shall be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God. Gal. vi. 16. When a man hath been busy about his affairs, he may be abroad all day, and can come home and visit his tabernacle at night, and not sin. Job v. 24. Oh blessed thing! What can be the meaning of that? Can any man suppose it a sin to go home to his own house? No, but that he can visit his tabernacle without conscience of sin. I have kept a good conscience this day, blessed be God: it may be I have met with temptations, to be in a debauch by those that would have insulted over the weakness of my flesh; it may be I have, but God hath kept me. Blessed be God, now I can visit my tabernacle without sin, and lay me down in rest and peace; I can visit my tabernacle without spot, without any such spot. What a blessed thing is it, when God brings about that reconciliation between him and them, and where the peace is kept and continued between a man and his own conscience, not by stupifying of conscience, (a fearful thing that is,) but by the conforming of a man's heart and inclinations and ways thereunto.

SERMON IV.*

2 Corinthians, iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We have had occasion several times of considering the context; "We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord; so ends the foregoing chapter. "Therefore, (so begins this chapter,) seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." You know what observations have been recommended to you from this portion of scripture, principally from these last words, but relatively considered, as well as absolutely. As,

1. That there is such a principle in every man, as that of conscience, unto which the great things of religion do carry with them a self-recommending evidence.

2. That the business of the gospel ministry doth lie very principally in a transaction with the very consciences of men.

3. That this transaction is to be managed in the sight of God. And,

4. That from all this proceeds, in very great part, the unfainting vigour and resolvedness of faithful ministers in their work.

We have insisted upon the first of these; we will now proceed as far as we can with the rest, and begin with the next in order; which is,

2d Doctrine. That the great business of the gospel ministry doth very principally lie in a transaction with men's conscience. We are here to shew you, 1st. wherein this transaction lies; and, 2dly, to shew that the work of the ministry lies in it, and must so do very principally.

* Preached February 8, 1690.

1st. Wherein this transaction with the consciences of men doth lie. Why,

1. In dealing with men about such things chiefly as do most directly come under, and as are most apt to take hold of their consciences; in insisting (I say) chiefly upon such things as are most likely to fasten upon conscience, and take hold of that.

2. In endeavouring to set such things in as clear light as may be, to represent them as advantageously as we can, that conscience may have nothing to do but to discern the very evidence of the things. This is plain, this is clear: to represent things so that at first sight they may be assented and submitted unto as much as in us lies. And,

3. To appeal hereupon to conscience about it; that is our business, recommending ourselves to every man's conscience; that is what we have to do, *provocare*, to call unto conscience: 'Come, do thy part; see if there be not evidence in this and that truth; see if there be not equity in this or that precept; see if there be not wickedness or danger in this or that sin; see if there be not righteousness and reasonableness in this or that judgment or determination, that we find recorded in the word, and pronounced in reference to such and such cases.' These (you know) were the four heads instanced in, to let you see the things of religion that do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Our business must be to appeal to conscience about such things; to call upon it to do its office, to judge and pronounce, Are not these things so? And,

4. To endeavour to awaken conscience, supposing it drowsy and somnolent, as God knows, it is too much with the most; when we have appealed to conscience, to appeal again, as that petitioner did to that great prince: "I appeal from thee," said she.—"From me? (said the prince.) Whither will you appeal?"—"I appeal (said she) from you, asleep: you were asleep just now, while I was telling my story: I appeal from you asleep, to you awake." So we are to appeal from conscience to conscience; from conscience asleep to conscience awake. That must be our business, to endeavour, as much as in us is, to awaken conscience to the exercise of its office in that great business, that we recommend ourselves to it about. And,

5. To answer what we can the cavils and foolish counter-reasonings of carnal hearts against truth and against duty, or in favour of any way of sin, that the litigating humour

may (as much as in us is) be repressed, and men's spirits be subdued, that they may have no more to say; but that their mouths may be stopped, and they laid under a restraint to lie down silenced and convinced before the Lord. And,

6. To urge conscience to its final answer, to its determination upon the whole, as there is such a thing as an answer of conscience to be finally given in particular cases, that we may apply ourselves to men about. And if conscience be rectified and sanctified, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, it will be brought at length to give a good answer, a complying answer, a yielding answer; as that which the apostle speaks of: "A like figure whereunto (having spoken of the ark before, that saved Noah and his household from perishing in the universal inundation) even baptism doth now save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, (not the external sign,) but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter iii. 21. The main and principal thing that we do apply ourselves to men, and the consciences of men, about, is, to bring them back to God; that is, whereas the bond was broken between God and men, we would fain have them under new bonds, we would fain there should be a redintigration, that they may come into a covenant relation to God, through Christ, again; of such a covenant entered into between God and the returning souls of men, baptism was a seal; the confirmation. It is not the external part of baptism that will avail a man any thing, not the washing away the filth of the flesh; why, will not that do? No, but that whereunto baptism is to seal; that is, the answer of a good conscience. When sinners are dealt withal, 'Come, will you yet have God to be your God,—God the Father, Son, and Spirit, to be your God?' And the soul is brought at length to yield a ready, free, complying answer; 'Aye, with all my heart.' This is that will save a man; this brings him as into an ark, to save him from the common deluge of wickedness and wrath that do overwhelm this world. Then he is safe, then he is in the ark; that is, when his conscience hath given a complying answer, with a sincere conscience, 'I do take God to be my God.' The sign (it may be) that was applied many years ago, avails nothing, without the thing signified: but if the thing signified do come to obtain, to take place, here is one that takes God to be his God; then the business is done; then the man is safe, when the sign before applied is now answered and filled up; there is that

which is correspondent to it; the soul is now won, and brought to give its answer; the covenant stands between God and it, it is a sealed covenant; and so is such an one marked out for safety and preservation from the common ruin. And this is that which we have to deal with the consciences of men about, to bring them to a final answer. Sinner, wilt thou still live without God in the world? Wilt thou still wander from God? go astray from God? Dost thou still think it safe to live in estrangement from God, and neglect of him? never thinking of worshipping him, trusting on him, loving him, and delighting in him, from day to day? Or wilt thou yet at length be brought, upon the many applications that have been made to thy conscience, to answer, with a sincere conscience, 'Now I am willing, from my very soul, that God shall be mine; and I will be his in and through Christ.' It is herein that our transaction doth receive its happy issue. This is the issue we drive at to bring conscience to a final answer, if it be possible, 'I am won, I am overcome; I do answer, in my very conscience; I judge it best and safest, most equal, most dutiful, and most comfortable, to fall in with the gospel offer, and take God in Christ, for my God.' But,

2dly. Why must our business thus lie in a transaction of men's consciences? To that I shall need to say very little, because the things speaks itself. That is,

1. That there being this principle in man, which signifies nothing else but a power to judge in such matters, relating to such practices as shall be laid before him. And,

2. The objects carrying in themselves (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to this principle, nothing remains, nothing is left, but that in the course of our ministry, in the way of our dealings with men's souls, that we do thus apply ourselves, do thus deal with this principle of conscience. Touching these objects, it is the office of conscience to judge of things, and the things themselves carry with them an evidence that comes under the notion, cognizance, and judgment of conscience; even by that very light wherewith they are clothed, and therefore the matter speaks itself; our business must lie there or nowhere; if we do not in these matters apply ourselves to the consciences of men, and treat with them, we had as good talk with stones and pillars.

Therefore I shall leave that, and speak somewhat to the third observation, the use of which too will best fall in afterwards together.

3rd Doctrine.—This transaction with the consciences of men must be in the sight of God,—there it must be made. I shall here briefly shew, 1st, what this means; and, 2ndly, why it must be so.

1st. What meaneth that such a resolution should be taken, and such a course held, we will transact, and do transact with the consciences of men in the sight of God? What can the meaning of that be? Why,

1. Negatively, the meaning of it is not, barely, that God shall see, or will see, how this transaction is managed. That is not all that is meant by it, for it is very manifest that the import of this speech holds forth to us somewhat electively done in this matter; but God's seeing us is not a thing subject to our's, or any man's choice, he will see whether we will or no; and if that were all that were resolved in the case, it were to resolve God's part, and not our own part; and this were idle and foolish for us to do; he will do his own part, and this in particular; he will see, look on, and behold whatsoever we do, and whatsoever you do. "All things are naked and manifest to his eye, with whom we have to do." (Heb. iv. 12.) And, therefore, it were a piece of very impertinent officiousness for us, to take upon us to determine and resolve, that God should see what we do in this matter, should look upon you and us, and see how the transaction between us and your consciences is ordered, that he shall take notice of it; that cannot be the thing meant; as if any man should say, I will do such or such a thing in the light of the sun; nobody will understand the meaning of that to be, I will make the sun shine, or cause the sun to shine while I do such a thing: he can resolve nothing, but in reference to his own act, and in reference to his own part. And so it is here, it is only in reference to our own part, that we resolve such a transaction in the sight of God. Therefore, positively,

2. There is a part or act of our own implied in this, that we will do such and such a thing, and this in particular in the sight of God. And what is that? That is, we will appeal to the sight of God, and to his judgment, about what we do in this matter. And this is a thing electively and voluntarily done, as a matter of choice, that we will appeal to his eye: it is true, it is no matter of choice that God will see, but it is matter of choice that we will appeal to that eye of his. And this is the great character of sincere ones, often mentioned in scripture;

that is, that as they know God beholds and sees them in every thing, so they do study and labour to approve themselves to his eye, and (as it were) invocate his observation. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.) It was a dignostick of sincerity, that was enjoined as a test upon Abraham; "I am God all-sufficient, walk before me, and be perfect or upright." (Gen. xvii. 1.) Walk before me, walk so as apprehending my inspection, and so as to approve thyself to the observation of mine eye, through thy whole course; and with this, there is a conjunction mentioned of his uprightness; implying that to be a dignostick of this: "Walk before me and be upright;" walk as in my sight, (as only the upright man will do,) and therein shew thyself an upright man. So the Psalmist, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (Psalm cxvi. 9.) I will studiously approve myself, through the whole of my walking, unto the view and judgment of his observing eye. And so it is said of them who do truly, or that do the truth, that they bring their deeds to the light, "that they may be manifest that they are wrought in God." (John iii. 21.) They do willingly expose their deeds to be viewed in the light, from the secret consciousness that there is a divine power and presence with them that doth help them on in their way and course: and this, they desire, should be made manifest, that they do not live at the common rate; that they do not walk as men, (as the expression is, 1 Cor. iii.) That it may be seen that their course is managed in the power of a divine principle, that their works are wrought in God. Here is an elective appeal all along to the divine eye; which hypocrites and unsound persons would decline and shun even to the uttermost; "they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved." (John iii. 20.) And when it is said, "there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves," it implies, fain they would keep in the dark from the eyes of the looker upon the ways of men, who sees their goings. They are for the night, for a corner, for darkness, but they can find none; they vainly seek it, though this be the wish of their hearts, as the poet expresseth it, "*Da mihi noctem, da mihi nubem;*" Oh for a cloud, Oh for a dark night! We do appeal to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; we appeal to his eye voluntarily and

freely desiring him to be judge when we deal and treat with men upon this account, whether we do not sincerely desire their best good, and highest glory, in this negociation of ours. This, therefore, is the plain meaning of doing what we do in this case "in the sight of God;" that is, as electively appealing to the eye of God, in the transaction and management of this affair.

And so there are now two parts manifestly distinguishable; that is, God's part looking on, and man's part in appealing to his observing eye, and expressing a desire of his complacency in reference to those things he is looking upon; but then, as to our own part, or man's part, wherein we are concerned, which lies under our present consideration, that you may also see is two-fold; that is, there is the preacher's part, and there is the hearer's part: it is the former of these that is directly here meant; and the latter implicitly and by consequence.

1. The former is meant directly, that is, they whose business it is, as ministers of the gospel, to treat and deal with the souls of men; their part is directly there expressed, to appeal to the eye of God, concerning their own integrity and the uprightness of their aims, in all the applications they make from him, and upon his account to souls. But then,

2. The hearer's part is implied; not as that in reference whereto we can undertake, but as that in reference whereto we do and must endeavour; that is, that they also may be brought to appeal to the eye of God, in this transaction that is between us and their consciences. This is that we must endeavour. As,

1. We must endeavour to make them sensible of the divine presence, in which we are at such times as these. That is incumbent upon us on our part, that we engage you as much as in us is, to do your part; that is, to appeal jointly with us to the eye of God, about that for which we appeal to you and your consciences; our business must be to make you apprehensive and sensible, that we are in the presence of God; that there is a divine eye inspecting us, looking upon us: we must put you in mind of this, that we speak, and you hear in the presence of God: and under the observation of his eye, his piercing eye is upon us, he sees with what mind and design the speaker preacheth; he observes with what temper and disposition of mind every hearer heareth. This we are to our utmost to make you apprehensive of. And,

2. Supposing deviations and wanderings, (to which we are always too prone,) we must summon you into the divine presence, so as to let the matter we deal with you about, be transacted as in that presence: we must deal with you as upon such a supposition as this, It is an easy thing for you to put off a man that speaks to you?—you think you may boldly and safely slight the words of a poor mortal man: but we must have you into the presence of God, and all this affair must be transacted as under his eye. If you do disregard what a poor mortal man saith to you, come, let you and I go before the Lord now, here he is upon the throne; pray, let him have the hearing of the controversy between you and us; give him the hearing of it, let him see the state of the case, submit the matter between us to his judgment, whether you ought not to receive such and such truths, whether you ought not to comply and yield to the authority of such and such precepts, and whether you ought not to dread and shun to the uttermost such and such sins. Pray, let the great God have the hearing of the business; we summon you into his presence, and would not have you regard us in what we say, but him. And if we should go to particular instances; it may be, there are such and such sins that divers of you have been from time to time admonished of, and it hath been all in vain; you would never give us the hearing; we have spoke (as it were) to the wind. Suppose a licentious young man have given up himself to walk in the way of his own heart; and we have reasoned the matter with such, and debated it with them, whether it were not safer for them to be under the divine government, to walk according to divine prescriptions, than follow the hurry and impetus of sensual inclinations; telling them this will be your death, this will be your ruin, this you will rue for another day; but they will not hear us. Then we only say in this case, 'Come, and let you and I go before the Lord;' and let the matter be reasoned out in his sight, or in his hearing, and let him judge between you and us, whether you ought not to hearken, whether it will be fit for you, a creature, to oppose the will of your Creator; one that was raised out of the dust but the other day, to oppose your appetite and inclination to his authority, to his wisdom, to his good, and righteous, and holy will? Do but try, and see what courage and confidence you can have, thus to give the cause to your own will, fancy, and humour, against his will, wisdom, and authority; now you

are brought before his throne, and now the matter comes to be transacted immediately as under his eye, between you and a poor messenger of his, that he employs in his work; and so, though we can only directly do our own part in this business, as appealing to conscience under God's eye; we must likewise put you upon your part, that is, must summon you, and draw you in with us, into such an appeal to God, when we are dealing with your consciences in their souls' concerns.

Now, by this time, I hope you see what this transaction with the consciences of men, as in the sight of God doth mean. And if.

2ndly. You would know why it must be thus, why this transaction should be with the consciences of men in the sight of God, manifold reasons presently offer themselves. As,

1. It is his work that we are employed in, his business that we go about, when we speak to men to turn and live, when we would have them repent and believe the gospel; when we would have you come back to God, and pay your homage unto him, it is his work that we are doing all this time. And why should we not, as much as it is possible, aim and endeavour, that we may see how his work is done? That is, that we bring you under his eye as much as in us is.

2. We go about this work of his continually in his name. It is his work, and done in his name; by his authority we continue in it, being sent of him. Why should not what is done in his name, be done under his eye, even of our own design and choice, as much as is possible, on the one hand and the other? For whatsoever we are to do, we are to do in the Lord's name; we that speak, are to speak in the Lord's name; you that hear, are to hear in the Lord's name, or hear what is spoken in his name. And why should it not be a matter of choice with us, that all be transacted as under his eye and in his sight? And,

3. He hath equal power over us, and over you; his power obtains alike over all; and where we are sure his power is alike over all, why should we not all endeavour alike to walk under his eye, and labour to approve ourselves to his eye, under which all are? And,

4. He perfectly knows all matters of fact that do belong to this transaction; and, therefore, since we are sure he

doth, it is better that we consider it, and accordingly, study to approve ourselves to his inspection; he doth know all the matter of fact; he knows my thoughts, and all your thoughts, throughout this whole transaction, on such a day, and at such a time as this. And,

5. He is the only competent judge of the matter of right; whether you or I do right or wrong, in reference to what is spoken and heard. And lastly,

6. To be sure, he will be the final judge; it is good for us to consent and agree to it, that he shall be the present judge, and that then this transaction be carried on designedly under his eye; he will be the judge at last, when the secret of all hearts shall be laid open, and there is no declining his judgment; certainly, therefore, it is the wisest and best course, as much as possible by consent, and willingly to bring things under his eye, and notice now; and endeavour to approve all this transaction to the inspection, the present inspection of that eye, the final judgment whereof we cannot avert.

And so way is made for somewhat of use, in reference to this two-fold observation, that we have thus far insisted on: many things might be said, but for present take this.

We may see by all this what the case is like, of them that live long disobedient to the voice of the gospel, under which they live. See a little and judge of the state of their case and affairs. They that live statedly under the gospel, must be supposed to have many applications made to their consciences, for that is the very business of the gospel, immediately to apply itself to the very consciences of men; for you that have lived long under the gospel, (whether successfully or unsuccessfully,) there have been many applications made to your consciences, by those that have been employed in this work about matters of the highest importance and concern; you had best consider with what success and with what effect; but if it hath been with little, that is, if hitherto you have disobeyed the voice of that gospel, under which you have so long lived, it cannot but have been with very great regret, many turns and reclamations of your consciences: if conscience were not a capable principle of judgment, when it is applied unto, when appeals are made to it,—it would be the vainest thing in all the world to talk of commending ourselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God, as the apostle

here speaks. Why to their consciences? It were as good do it to any thing else as conscience,—if conscience be not a principle susceptible of conviction, when it is applied unto. Therefore now let it be considered, that conscience is a judge wherever it hath place and is applied unto; it doth (as it were) keep its power; and, indeed, it is capable of sustaining several parts: where there is a judicature, there is a registry too; and it is as well capable of recording things as of judging them. It may be, many have made it their business to slur and blot the records that are kept in the court of conscience. But that is a vain thing, this shall all come into view again. Every time that thou hast come, with a vain heart, into the presence of God; every time thou hast offered here the sacrifice of a fool; every time thou hast come like such an one, with thine eyes in the ends of the earth, when they should have been intent upon the Divine Majesty, to pay thy homage to him, every time thou hast opposed resolution against conviction of conscience, thou wert convinced in thy conscience, certainly there must be a change, and a reformation; things must not be with me as they have been; it is not a right way I have been, but thou hast resolved I will not reform,—I will live as I have lived, do as I have done: every time that Christ hath been offered to thee, and thou hast refused him, and he hath had cause to complain, as in the prophet, "My people would not hearken to my voice; Israel would have none of me." (Psalm lxxxi. 11.) They that call themselves mine, profess themselves christians; call themselves by my name, would have none of me; every time thou hast been urged, If thou wilt have life, thou must have the Son; "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." (John v. 12.) Come, (saith God,) wilt thou have my Son? Thou hast not said yea; thy heart hath not consented; and that is all one as if thou hast said, No; when the thing hath not been done so often, hast thou been recorded a refuser of the Son of God? thy conscience hath been convinced over and over, I ought to receive the Son of God; this command being brought to me from heaven, to believe in his name; that is, to resign myself to him, and submit myself to him; but I never did, I never have; this is a most fearful case, that there ever should be such records in a man's conscience against him; to which there have been continual additions, from Lord's day to Lord's day, through

a long tract of time, and yet my course hath been the same. Notwithstanding all the reclamations of conscience, there hath been no reformation in my heart, none in my life; I am just the same as I was seven or ten years ago; so many convictions of conscience yet to be answered, for they never have been yet. Oh, think of the state of their affairs that have lived long under the gospel, disobedient to it. Conscience hath been still applied to, and appealed to in the sight of God, under his eye and notice; and yet there hath been no consent, no compliance given; "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." (Rom. xiv. 22.) That carries a dreadful intimation, Cursed is he that condemneth himself in that thing which he alloweth; *that he alloweth.* It was a good thing to have accepted the Son of God, to have turned to God, and come to an agreement with him in and by his Son, and to have broken off every evil way, and to have betaken myself to a strict and regular course of walking with God, a very good thing! What a cursed thing, a dismal thing is it then to condemn oneself in the thing which he alloweth? I allow all this to be good, and so am self-condemned for not doing it. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts." (1 John iii. 29.) When a man is condemned in his own heart; when he hath a judgment in his conscience about any matter, indefinitely considered, and his practice runs counter, so as to bring himself unawares under the judgment of it. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemneth thyself." (Rom. ii. 1.) Which is spoken in reference to what was said in the foregoing words, "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things, are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in those that do them." (Rom. i. last verse.) They know that judgment; it stands as a judgment, and a righteous one in their view; they themselves have judged this judgment to be right. Thou art then inexcusable, O man, that judgest in what thou judgest; thou hast judged such and such a way to be evil, and such and such a determination in reference thereunto to be righteous, and yet by doing that thing, thou dost run thyself under such a judgment and doom. Oh! what an inexcusable creature art thou!

SERMON V.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

OUR business must be at this time (as you foreknow) the application of two of those observations together, which have been gathered from these words, (two doctrines applied together;) to wit, the second, that the great business of the ministry lies in an immediate transaction with men's consciences; and the third, That this transaction with the conscience of men is to be managed in the sight of God. These two have been opened, and are now to be applied together; and there are many things which it is very obvious to infer from the one or the other of them. As,

1. That therefore, in carrying on the ministerial work, such things are mostly to be insisted on, as are most accommodate to conscience, and are apt to take hold of it; and about which we may, with the greatest confidence and clearness, appeal to the consciences of men: when once it is understood what principle in men we are to apply ourselves to in the ministerial work, it is then very obvious to collect what sort of things we are principally to insist upon in the managing of it. And you see what that principle is; it is not that we are wont to call wit, or fancy, or honour, or even the speculative understanding, or a disposition to religious disputes, about little, and doubtful, and less necessary matters; much less is it carnal appetite and inclination, that is to be concerned, so as to be pleased, or (at least) not to be displeased, not to be crossed, not to be vexed, not contended against; and, therefore, the things we have to say to men, in carrying on of our ministerial work, they must be quite of another nature from what would accommodate such principles as these in them. And you may easily apprehend how instructive this inference may be to all of you; and I hope you do apprehend it, though in the direct aspect of it, it doth only respect gospel ministers. And you might very well think it strange,

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and very little worth the while, that so many hundreds of persons should come together, only to hear ministers preach to one another; but yet, when you do understand what is fit for us to preach, you will also understand what is fit for you to hear, and what is necessary for you to receive, and to expect, and covet to hear most of all, and before other things; and so you cannot but see of how universal concernment, what I now infer, must be to us all; that is, that you are not to expect from us, (if we will faithfully pursue that which is our proper work, of applying ourselves directly and closely to the consciences of men;) you are not to expect (I say) fine and quaint sentences, elegant and well-formed orations; you are not to expect curious airy notions, and speculations; and much less are you to expect, that we should only prophesy to you smooth and pleasant things, that we may be sure will not offend, that will not bear hard upon any man's inclinations, how ill or irregular soever they may be; you cannot think any thing of this to be our business, when we have conscience to deal with in this matter, and are to apply ourselves immediately and directly thither, and in the sight of God, and under his eye: nor are you to expect that we should entertain you much with perplexed disputes about little and disputable matters; and which, commonly, by how much the more disputable they are, are so much the less necessary, God having so mercifully provided, that those things that should be most necessary, should be always plain, and so should need the least dispute. I know some have wondered, that when divers have very much concerned themselves in this juncture of time, both from the pulpit, and by the press, to propagate disputes about lesser differences, in matters of religion there should be so great a silence about these things among us; and we must really and freely declare to you, we have no leisure to mind those lesser things, we are taken up about greater, and we think we are bound to be taken up about unspeakably greater things. I do consider again and again, that saying of the apostle, "Study to be quiet, and do your own business." (Thess. iv. 11.) And for my part, I think this to be our business,—to deal with the consciences of men in the plainest and most important things, such as are most apt to fasten upon and take hold of conscience, for as to those lesser things, there is much that is very disputable about them; some indeed do think those things to be indifferent, which others think to be unlawful in the worship of God; yet

this is plain then, by consent on both sides, that they may be safely enough let alone, as to what they carry in themselves; and, therefore, we content ourselves to let them alone. This is plain, they may be well let alone: and when the apostle doth here speak of this thing, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," you see what, and about what things it was, by what follows:—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;" why then, by the manifestation of such truth as is necessary to prevent men being lost; that is, as is necessary in itself to their salvation, that they may not be lost; it was by such things by which they sought to commend themselves to the conscience of every man, in the sight of God. I know, indeed, there is a necessity, commonly alleged by some for these lesser things; that is, that though they are not necessary in themselves, they may become necessary as being enjoined. It is very true, indeed, if that were agreed on both sides, that they were indifferent,—we could readily say so with them; but they themselves very well know that that is not the state of the case between them and us; while on the one side such things are indifferent, on the other side, it is said, in the worship of God it is unlawful. And though it be true, indeed, that we are bound to obey every injunction of man, for the Lord's sake; yet we are bound to obey none of them against him; therefore, that is plain, about things in dispute, the safest way is to be unconcerned, in matters of which, there is some doubt. And every good man must concur with us in this principle, though the particular application of it to this or that case, the peculiarity and difference of their own judgment, obligeth them to disagree; but we shall certainly agree with all good and serious men, that differ from us about these lesser matters, in insisting principally and chiefly upon such matters as are necessary to save souls from being lost; for it is plain, that good and serious men do so too. And let those matters alone for the most part, and have as little mind to concern themselves about them, as we have; and no doubt, but that when we shall more generally agree to pursue such things most, as tend to promote and propagate the power of godliness, and keep it alive, and prevent (as much as in us is) all from acquiescing and taking up their rest, in any form whatsoever without it; when we shall all agree to make it our common business, to press the things that

do belong to living, real substantial godliness; and mutually to seek one another's common welfare, as we would do our own: when we agree to press and insist on these two great capital things, upon which hang all the law and the prophets; that is, loving the Lord our God, with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our might, and with all our mind, and loving our neighbour as ourselves; I doubt not, but as to all these lesser differences, or differences about lesser matters, either we shall come to an agreement about them too, in time; or our disagreement will be upon the matter, equal to an agreement;—that is, we shall disagree without displeasure, without being angry at one another for our disagreement; or, because that such and such will not make our consciences the measure and standard of their's,—a poor matter of quarrel, and certainly a most unrighteous one, that I should be offended at any man, because he will not make my conscience the measure of his; and it is upon the matter, all one in this our present state, whether there be a full and throughout agreement in every little thing, in judgment or practice; or, whether we can, very contentedly, bear with one another's differences. If we can do so, if we can disagree with one another modestly, and without expecting that another should resign and surrender the judgment of his conscience to the government of mine: If we can disagree with an humble sense of our common, yet remaining ignorance, and how little do all of us know, and how much yet needs to be added to our knowledge, even about the most important things; truly, disagreement upon such terms, so placid, so charitable, so calm, so unapt to offend, and which doth so little offend, will be a good step,—the next step to a perfect throughout agreement. It may be, that will never be in this world, or while our earthly state continues. But if our disagreement be thus managed, it will be less material; whether it be or no unto our peace, it can never be necessary unto them that are of a peaceable temper and disposition of themselves aforehand; but they who are not so, that have an unpeaceable temper and disposition in them, will always find one matter of quarrel and another; and if such things were once composed and taken up, would be sure to find out others; but this we may always reckon upon, that such as will be faithful in the ministerial work, we must expect to hear from them such things (as you have heard) that may carry in them a recommendableness to the consciences of men: in which,

when conscience is urged with matter of duty upon them, it will apprehend a *bonum:* my conscience tells me I shall be the better for it if I take this course, if I walk in such a way as the great things which concern the substance of religion direct unto, whereas those lesser matters, when you come to seek in them for a *bonum,* search into them for what they have of real good in them; you think to grasp at them for somewhat, and you grasp at nothing; you go to embrace them, and you embrace only a shadow, and hug an empty cloud and no more. They are things which conscience cannot feel to have any real and substantial goodness in them;—that then is the first thing hence inferred. Are we, in our ministerial work, to apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, and even in the sight of God? We then must deal with them about such things, that are most apt and accommodate to this purpose, to take hold of men's consciences.

2. If the work of the ministry do lie so much about men's consciences, we must reckon that the work of the Holy Ghost (who is to animate this ministry, and make it prosperous) must lie first and most immediately about the consciences of men too; not that it takes up there, but it is through conscience that it must touch men's hearts. "We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; but if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." If you view the series of the discourse, you will find that that speaks (as well as the matter speaks) itself, that God's way is to shine into hearts through convinced consciences: and this ministration, in all the foregoing chapter that the apostle refers to, is called the manifestation of the Spirit, and by it we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; to wit, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Therefore," (saith the apostle) in the following words, "having received this ministry, we faint not;" a ministry, managed by the Holy Ghost. Now, if the immediate first subject of this ministry hath to do with the consciences of men, then the consciences of men must be that which the Holy Ghost must have to do with too; for the supreme Agent, and the subordinate, are both to operate upon the same sub-

ject,—as you now that are writing, your hand and pen write upon the same paper, and not your hand upon one, and your pen upon another. It is conscience that is the seat of conviction, and thither the Holy Ghost, by the gospel ministry, doth apply itself for this purpose; "When he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John xvi. 8.) The Comforter, (so we read it,) when he is come, shall do so and so, but sure we do much misread it when we read it so. *Paracletos* is the word, the *paraclete,* the proper signification is the advocate or pleader, a pleader as at law. The disciples were here overwhelmed with sorrow, to think what would become of them when their Lord was gone, of which he had been immediately foretelling them; "Because I have told you that I must be gone from you, sorrow hath filled your heart;" that is, they did recount with themselves, since he had told them, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that they should be witnesses for him, because they had been with him from the beginning; then, think they, the whole weight and stress of the christian cause in this world lies upon our shoulders, and we shall surely sink under it; Who are we that we should think to set up a new religion in the world,—a religion, against which all sorts, both Jews and Gentiles have so rooted and natural a prejudice? What, are we for this? Why, saith our Lord Christ, never trouble yourselves, when I go, the advocate shall come,—that pleader, that mighty pleader; and he shall make strange work in the world when once he comes; he shall take up my cause; whereas I have been traduced and charged as a seducer, and a deceiver, he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me, and of my righteousness and the equity of my righteous cause; and, thereupon, of the very completing and perfection of that righteousness, which is to be had by me, which depends thereupon; and of judgment, when I shall be known to be enthroned, and to have all government, and principality, and power, put under me, or into my hands,—and so the christian cause shall live, and spread, and triumph, when I am gone, and so much the more for my being so, for if I be not gone, that great pleader will not come, and when he comes, this shall be his great business, conviction,—he shall fasten such conviction upon the consciences of men, they shall not be able to withstand and baffle. Oh, when that mighty Spirit comes among us, then will no man be able to persist in a carnal

course and habit of heart and life; but this Spirit will make them weary of it, they will never be able to endure the weight and pressure of his convictions, when through the gospel ministry he comes to fasten and take hold of consciences, and to implead them upon such an account. What? Is this christianity? Is this like a living union with the Son of God, the Lord from heaven? To live continually like worms of this earth, grovelling in the dust, always minding and savouring no higher, and no greater thing? But, again,

3. Is the ministerial work to be managed in the very sight of God, with the consciences of men? Then (this having a very ill look upon the kingdom and interest of the wicked one) it is obvious further to infer, that the devil's work must lie very much too about the consciences of men; that is to blind conscience, to cheat conscience, to deceive conscience, to disguise and misrepresent things to the consciences of men; so you see it allows, if our gospel be hid,—if it doth not reach home with convictive and energetical light to the very consciences of men, it is because "the god of this world hath blinded their minds;" it doth reach home with such light, except to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds. If men cannot see what is their way and duty in very plain and evident things; as that a man, who was a sinner even by nature, and under wrath, can never be acceptable to God, but for the sake of a Redeemer; and never for his sake, if he have not living union with him, if he be not in him, and so in him as to be a new creature,—old things being done away, and all things being become new. If men cannot see truth in so plain matters as these, that speak themselves to every man's conscience, it is, because the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. If the work of the Gospel, and of the Spirit that breathes in it, be with the consciences of men, the devil's work must lie there too; if it be possible to blind conscience and disguise things to conscience; that is, to corrupt men's judgments of things, and to make them to apprehend things otherwise than they are. And so it was that he did apply himself to our first parents, only by putting false glosses upon those plain preceptive and minatory words that should have obliged and awed conscience. Oh, never think God meaneth such severity to you, ye shall not die if you eat of this fruit; never think he intended you should die; no, this is that will

make you wise and knowing, far beyond what you are, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil. His business was to put a false gloss and colour upon things, to deceive their judgments and consciences, and to lead them into transgression, and this his design is still to keep men in that state of apostacy into which he had drawn them from returning to God, only by imposing upon and cheating their consciences. Notwithstanding this loose and careless course you hold, never trouble yourselves, all will be well enough, a formal religion will serve the turn, and be less painful and laborious to you than that real one, and that living one that is from time to time so much pressed upon you. It will serve your turn to go to church, or go to a meeting, and hear a sermon on the Lord's day, and live as you list all the week long, you never need concern yourselves further. All the devil's care is to keep conscience from doing its duty and its proper office, that if it be applied and appealed to by us, in the ministry of the gospel, you may not attend it; it may not be at leisure to hear what we say, that it may be kept asleep, or diverted some way or other, or that it may otherwise attend things than according to the truth.

4. We may further infer, hence, that since the business of the ministry is to transact with conscience, from time to time, in the very sight of God: they that live under such a ministry, if conscience ever come to be awakened into exercise, they must live a very weary life, if they live in a course of sin and estrangement from God. They that will, (I say,) under such a ministry, sin on still, and wander from God, still they will lead a very weary life; it must needs be a very uneasy course that such must hold in the world; for if conscience be awakened and do attend, they will be continually hearing things that tend to disturb and disquiet them, and make them apprehend danger, and see themselves like to be ruined, and undone, and lost, in the course that they hold: and therefore, certainly, the case is very deplorable of such persons, who, under such a ministry, do still live in sin, whether they live in a course of very gross wickedness, or whether they keep in a course of vain formal religion, and no more. They must be very uneasy if conscience be awake; and if conscience be not awake, it is worse, and their case more deplorable. And really it is dismal to think of it, that such persons should hear so much, from day to day, that hath a tendency in it

to make them to fear and suspect their present way, and present state, with so little effect; for on they go, only because (though that be uneasy to them) they apprehend to get that sin subdued and mortified, that hath governed in them and had the throne, will be more uneasy; and since it comes to pass, that, things being brought to this pass, either sin must be mortified, or conscience must be mortified, they betake themselves to the latter. If they cannot be patient of it, that sin must die, and undergo mortification, then, of consequence, they must betake themselves to this, that conscience must undergo this dying and mortification; and so, really, they have a very uneasy task of it, that they must, for their own peace sake, be continually fighting against conscience, from one Lord's day to another, and endeavouring that it may let them alone in their old security, in their old carnality, in their old neglect of God. Here is their business with their consciences. Oh, conscience, let me live in neglect of Christ, and be quiet! Let me live fearless of God in this life, and be quiet! Let me live a prayerless life, and be quiet! But conscience cannot very easily submit to let such be quiet, because there are such courses taken, from time to time, while they live under such a ministry, whereby we must be applying ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God. This awakens conscience afresh, and then it must be laid asleep again; so toilsome and uneasy a way of it have some to perdition; they are fain to fight their way to hell, even through so many and so great difficulties. And,

5. We may further infer, that if the gospel ministry is principally to be taken up in dealing with the consciences of men in the sight of God, it can be no shame to any man to be in this way conquered and subdued, and brought under to the foot of God in Christ; it can be no shame to any body to be thus conquered: for to be conquered by conscience, is, upon the matter, to be conquered by himself. You have no reason to be ashamed to be conquered by yourself; you yield to yourself in the case; you yield to your own light, that which God hath made your own; you yield to your convinced judgment; you have no cause to be ashamed of that. It is a shame for a man to be cheated, to be imposed upon, to be made to appear a fool, as every sinner is that goes on in the way of his own heart, "disobedient, and deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." Titus iii. 3. But it is no shame for a man to be undeceived; it is no shame for a man to be brought to exer-

cise a right judgment, once certified and set aright in him. This is a glory, to be thus conquered; you are indeed conquered; you alter your course; you cease to be what you were: but it is brought to that pass, you do but yield to yourself, yield to your own light, yield to your own judgment, and to the power of that conviction you see is no longer to be withstood. And upon the same account,

6. They that do conquer conscience and gospel-light in such a sense, have no reason to boast of their victory; they have very little reason to brag; they that can say and tell their companions, I have heard such and such a sermon, and it put me into a deadly qualm; I knew not what to do; my heart almost failed me, and began to misgive me; and I began to think within myself, I must alter my course, I must become a Christian in good earnest: I had such thoughts as these, and such inclinations, but I have overcome them; I have conquered conscience; I have got the victory over them. Alas! these men have little reason to boast of this, of having conquered their reason, judgment, conscience, and light, and made these to give place to lust and sensual inclinations; when a man hath been summoned and called into the presence of God, and hath had so mighty a load laid upon his spirit, as to have such a thing contested with him in the sight of God, and under the divine eye, yet he hath conquered it, got the victory; this, certainly, he hath no cause to boast or brag of. A dismal victory! a few such victories as these will undo him quite. If God should let you carry the cause, carry the victory, from day to day, this victory will end in a total and endless ruin. Again,

7. We may further infer, that, since this ministerial work is to be managed with the very consciences of men in the sight of God, it is one of the most weighty solemn things that a man can possibly go about, to hear a sermon where he is likely to be dealt with at this rate; that is, generally to go to hear a gospel sermon, according to the true import of the gospel, and the true design of the gospel ministry, it is one of the awfullest solemnest things that a man can go about in the world; for he ought to reckon in this case, I am now going to such a place, and for what? Why, it is to hear a sermon, in which I expect my conscience is to be appealed to all along; and it is to be appealed unto in the sight of God; and the minister will summon me into the presence of God: and if I do not yield,—but my heart hesitates, and stands off,—I expect to hear

this from him; Come, let you and I debate this matter in the sight of God, before the throne of God, and see if you know how to baffle conscience, and reject its convictions, in the sight of God, and while God looks on and audits the business between you and me, and between you and your own consciences. It is a great thing to go to hear a sermon upon such terms: many little think what they do, when they run to a sermon as they would to a play, or to such a meeting as they would to a bear-baiting: but if they would but consider what the gospel ministry is, and wherein it lies, in a transaction with men's consciences, and that transaction to be managed in the sight of God, they would find it an awful thing to go to hear a sermon upon these terms.

2d Use. And, therefore, now for a conclusion to be added to these inferences, as somewhat of further use, pray let this put you, in the next place, upon reflection, upon considering; you have lived long under the gospel, under the ministry of it; the very business whereof was to transact with your consciences in the sight of God. Pray do but inquire,

1. Have you been wont to engage your consciences in this transaction? And,

2. Have you been wont to do it as in the sight of God, yea or nay? for hitherto you have been called, to this you have been called; your consciences have been applied and appealed to: have you heard their voice answering thus; Why, I am called to a transaction, to my part in a transaction I agree readily, my conscience shall be appealed to? And, further, have you agreed the transaction shall be in the sight of God, answering thus; "I am willing to be judged by the impartial supreme Judge, and if I cannot approve myself in his sight, I will condemn and abase myself in his sight?" I pray, hath it been wont to be so with you in that long tract of time wherein you have sat under the gospel? Have you engaged conscience in such a transaction as this? And have you done it in the sight of God, from time to time? If you have not, hence is your not profiting; hence is your sitting under the gospel, from year to year, to no purpose. Conscience hath been spoken to, and would never answer; you have been careful to keep it asleep, to keep it undisturbed; you have declined the divine presence; you would not come and present yourselves before the judicature of God; you have laboured to stifle all such thoughts as much as in you was; your case is,

then, as our Saviour represents it with the Jews: "Whereto shall I liken this generation; they are like children sitting in the market place, and calling their fellows, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." Matt. xi. 16. Even so it is with this generation. And is it not so with our generation, too? We speak to the consciences of men, and they do not echo back; they give no correspondent answer: when we would transact with them, they are dead, or asleep. And hence, no good is done; conscience is not engaged; it will not advert to the business in hand; it minds it not: and thereupon the kingdom of God doth not suffer violence, (Matt. xi. 12.) as in that same context; "For until now (saith our Saviour) the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." But now there is a dead calm, a dead flat, and we pipe to men, and they do not dance; we mourn to them, and they do not lament; there is no echo, no correspondent voice. This is now (saith he) the case of this generation. But I might here be a little more particular in my inquiry. And,

1. You know you have been often urged and pressed, as to a thing wherein the very substance of all religion doth inchoatively consist and lie, all serious and living religion; that is, a solemn surrender of yourselves to God in Christ. "Yield yourselves to God." Rom. vi. 13. "Present yourselves to him a living sacrifice." Rom. xii. 1. As it is said of those Christians, "They gave themselves to the Lord." 2 Cor. viii. 5. Hath not this been a thing plain to your consciences, that you ought to have done so? And have none of you lived in the neglect of it to this day? You could never find a leisure time wherein solemnly to apply yourselves to God in Christ, and say, Lord, I now come to surrender to thee thine own; I have brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature, myself, my own self: accept a poor wandering soul, that now desires to give up itself to thee, and take thee, in Christ, for mine. A plain thing as any thing can be to any conscience of man: conscience hath been frequently applied to in this case, as in the sight of God, and yet, from year to year, no such thing as this hath ever been done. Again,

2. To consider how often you have been spoken to about solemn preparation for such a day's work as this; to come with prepared hearts, in some measure, at least to design to come prepared to the holy solemnities of such a day.

God knows how often you have been applied to, and conscience hath been spoken to in this matter; but with what effect, you in great part know, that still are wont to rush upon the sacred solemnities of such a day without considering—It is for my life, for my soul; it is in order to eternity, that I am approaching into the presence of God; and that it is that God that made me, I have to do with; him I am going to serve, him I am going to seek.

3. How often hath conscience been appealed to about prayer? A course of prayer? Of secret closet prayer, and family prayer? God knows with what effect. A dismal thing, if any of you have suffered a conviction of conscience about this years ago, and yet still live in the neglect of this, against conscience, to this very day. And,

4. About the great business of watchfulness, concerning which we have heard so much of late. Conscience hath been there applied to, as in the sight of God. Pray consider, are any of us become more watchful for it over our spirits, and over our way and course? It will be of great concernment to us, to urge ourselves, faithfully, and impartially, with such questions and inquiries as these.

And then, to close all, pray hereupon let us be persuaded and prevailed upon more to commune with conscience, and to commune with it in the sight of God, seeing we are in the sight of God put upon it. And to comply with conscience, yield to it, comport with it, and if (as was said) we cannot find our case to admit of it, that our consciences should justify us before God, let our consciences condemn us before God, let them judge us before God. If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord: we shall then have the matter thus taken up between him and us; otherwise, we still remain liable to his severe and uncontroulable judgment. And to urge this, pray do but weigh these few things.

1. That conscience, often baffled, will grow stupid. It is the way to stupify conscience to baffle it often: if you get an habit of that, of running counter to light, and of imposing upon conscience, and bearing it down, it will become so tamely passive, that it will lay no restraint upon you,—you may do what you will; conscience will say no more, but let you take your course.

2. If you do so, the Spirit of God will retire too, and withdraw, and not assist conscience, which (as we are told) it doth in a way of reflex operation; but it doth as much (no doubt) in a way of direct operation, too: it

works with conscience; and then conscience ceaseth, when there is a cessation of all such exercise with conscience; the Spirit can no more converse with us, than with that which is dead; when that thing is dead, quite dead, mortified into a total utter death, wherewith the Spirit of God should converse with us, then it retires, and is gone, in displeasure, as being grieved, vexed, and quenched. Oh, what a dreadful thing is that! It is a terrible thing when the Spirit is retired and gone, merely upon that resistance that he hath met with in our consciences. His business was to co-operate with them, to work with them, and by them. And we have made it our business to stupify conscience, to stifle and suppress it: and if the Spirit be gone thereupon in displeasure, this is a fearful thing. And consider,

3. That if, through the mercy of God, conscience should ever yet awake, and the Spirit return, by how much the longer it hath been stifled, so much the more terrible it will roar upon you, when it doth return. And if you be saved at length, you will be "saved as by fire," as I may allude to those words of the apostle. But,

4. If it never awake in this world, by how much the more industriously it hath been kept asleep in you, and by how much the less it hath done the part of an instructor and director, so much the more it will do the work of a tormentor hereafter, an everlasting tormentor. And this is a most dismal thing, for an intelligent immortal spirit to come down into perdition, into the place of torment, with open eyes, and to be asked there, "How camest thou hither?" and to be forced to answer, "It was by running all my time against my light; it was by contending against my conscience, and the grace of the Spirit of God, to the very last; so I made my way to perdition." Then that conscience that could never be heard before, will be heard then, and will be felt; the worm that dies not, gnawing eternally, even eternally upon the soul, amidst that fire and those flames that shall never be quenched. But, in the last place,

5. Consider, too, the sweet peace and tranquillity that must ensue upon complying with conscience all along; following its light, obeying its convictions, keeping up a correspondence betwixt your judgments and consciences, and the temper of your spirits, and the course of your walking. This is an heaven upon earth. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

Upon these terms we may look in upon our souls, and behold all quiet: I have seen my way, and walked in it, as the grace of God hath kept me. "This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity; not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world;" which is heaven on this side heaven. How pleasant Sabbaths would you keep on these terms, when, looking back upon the last week, you have the testimony of your conscience; I have laboured to my uttermost to exercise a good conscience towards God and towards men, according to the light that I have received from his word, and by that gospel ministry under which I am? With how much peace shall a man upon one Lord's day look back upon his course through the foregoing week, since the former Lord's day? This would make Sabbaths pleasant days to you, upon the review of that sweet commerce you have had with him in former times, and in expectation of being thus led on, from Sabbath to Sabbath, to the everlasting Sabbath, at length, that remains for the people of God.

SERMON VI.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

WE have considered the words according to what, in themselves, they do import, and it remains now only to consider them (as we also proposed to do) in the reference to which they bear to the foregoing verse. "Therefore, as we have received this ministry, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, commending ourselves." And so it appears very plain that this course which the servants of God have held, in managing their ministerial work, to apply themselves directly therein to the consciences of men, hath been one of their great preservations against fainting in their work; so that they have

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pursued it with so much the more vigour and resolution upon this account, that herein they have made it their business to recommend themselves in the very sight of God to the consciences of men. And so we have this observation, as hath been already told you.

4th Doctrine. That the faithful ministers of the gospel, from their applying in their work to the very consciences of men, have very great encouragement to go on in it without fainting. And hence it will be requisite only,

1. To shew, briefly, what this fainting means. And then,

2. To shew you how great an encouragement against it this is; to wit, their applying themselves all along directly to the very consciences of men, even in the sight of God.

1. What this not fainting meaneth. Fainting (as was told you) is two-fold, as is obvious to all, either bodily, or mental; and it is manifest, this is mental fainting that is here disclaimed and disavowed, such as we find mentioned in Hebrews xii. 3. "Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Our minds do not faint in our work, while we are enabled to recommend ourselves in it to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and that fainting of the mind is again two-fold, it signifies either sloth or laziness, or else despondency and dejection of spirit: the word rendered fainting, hath this double import in the other places of scripture, where we find the same word used: "Our Lord spake a parable to such a purpose, to teach us to pray always, and not to faint." Luke xviii. at the beginning. That we neither grow slothful in it, nor despond upon it, so, be not weary of well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Gal. vi. 9. If you do not grow worse, if you do not suffer yourselves to be seized with a spirit of sloth, and if you do not yield to a desponding spirit. Now to be encouraged in our spirits doth include the opposite of these; for by how much the more there is of holy fortitude in any man's soul, so much the more there will be of lively and active vigour accompanying and going along with it.

And it is the design of the Apostle in this negative expression, to conjoin both these, fortitude and diligence, in opposition to despondency and sloth; and that there doth arise a very great spring of such enlivening vigour and fortitude, from this very reflection, that the faithful ministers of Christ may have upon the course of their

procedure in their work, *viz.*, That they have constantly all along in it, made it their business to recommend themselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. That is the thing. I am now,

2. To make out unto you, (having shewn you what this not fainting meaneth;) and this encouragement (which, from our applying ourselves to the consciences of men we do receive) will appear to be different, or to arise to us in different ways, according to the different consideration we may have of the thing itself, this application to conscience in the sight of God; that may be considered two ways, either in the effect or in the design.

In the effect; the immediate effect I mean, and that is the conviction of conscience. The immediate effect of such application to conscience, is, the conviction of conscience; and the design thereof, that imports our steady aimings at this thing, to fasten conviction on men's consciences, as much as is possible to us: the former of these, therefore, speaks the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the latter speaks the sincerity of it. The former is grounded on, and referred to, the former words in the text, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience;" and the latter refers to the latter words, "in the sight of God;" for as the convictiveness of this application terminates upon conscience itself: so sincerity herein terminates upon God, or upon the eye of God, who is the only judge of sincerity; hereupon these are the two things that are so very encouraging in this case,—the convictiveness of this application to conscience, and the sincerity of it.

1. The convictiveness of it; that is, a very encouraging, enlivening, fortifying thing to the heart of a serious minister, and one who is faithful in his work, and that from a two-fold account; to wit, as considering such a conviction of the consciences of men, (for we are now considering the effect and the aptitude of this application to produce and work it;) I say, considering this conviction of men's consciences,—1st. As the direct way to their conversion. And 2ndly, As that which however gains for the great God a testimony in their own very souls.

1st. It is a mighty encouraging thing, as it is the direct way to their conversion. If men be convinced, if the words of the gospel do once take hold of their consciences, this leads to conversion, it hath a tendency thitherward; and though we do not know that we convince the consciences

of men; we do not certainly know it; but when we are told; we sometimes are told, some do come to us, and own their convictions, and declare them to us; yet if we do but hope from the very evidence of what we see, that conscience is taken hold of, that some conviction is impressed on the consciences of them that hear us; this hope invigorates, enlivens, animates us, helps somewhat against fainting in our work. "Having this hope," (saith the Apostle in the close of the foregoing chapter, and referring to the self-same thing,) "we use great boldness of speech;" we read it plainness of speech, boldness it signifies; having this hope, we use great *parressy*, we use great freedom of speech; we speak as men that do expect to prevail, as those that look not to be baffled, nor to be disappointed in what we are designing in this matter, in our treaties and transactions with the souls, and especially with the consciences of men. We use great freedom of speech, having this hope, saith he; and so, in the following chapter, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men; we persuade men, and are made manifest to God, and we trust, also, we are manifest in your consciences. 2 Cor. v. 11. We trust we are, we hope we are, manifest in your consciences; and, therefore, we persuade with so much the more vigour, and so much the more earnestness, as apprehending, as trusting, and hoping, that you do in your consciences believe the things to be true, and real, and important, that we deal with you about: and that this must needs be a very enlivening thing, and tends much to animate a serious minister of Christ, and one who is in good earnest with his work, will appear if you do but consider these two things;—1st. What reason a man hath to hope, that conviction of conscience may end in conversion. And 2ndly. Consider how encouraging a thing this hope of conversion must itself be. These two things are distinctly to be considered, to make out our present purpose.

1. There is reason to hope, that when conviction hath taken hold of men's consciences, it may end in conversion; and so the hope of this, arising from the very plain evidence of things, that there is some conviction wrought in the minds and consciences of men, it gives ground to a farther hope, to an higher hope; if they become convinced more may become of it. If our blessed Lord Jesus Christ hath by this means made way into their consciences, it is to be hoped he will find a way into their hearts; and sure the

hope of converting souls is not altogether without ground, if we may hope that there are convictions wrought in the mind and conscience, and that upon these several accounts, to wit,

(1.) This is the only way by which, ordinarily and according to the constitution of human nature, the hearts of men are accessible. They are accessible but this way, that is, through their convinced consciences:—they are not otherwise accessible, than as light is let into their consciences, by which they may discern the truth, the greatness, the importance, the necessity of the things themselves that we deal with them about. And,

(2.) This is the gaining of a soul in part, the convincing of his conscience, the design is an entire conquest of the whole soul; this is a work that consists of parts, and is to be done by parts; and when the conscience is won, here is part of this work done, and there is so much the less behind; there is less to do than if men's consciences were not in the least apprehensive as yet what they were to believe, or what they were to do in order to their being saved.

(3.) The very leading part, the introductive part of the work is done, when this is done; when conscience is convinced about the great things proposed to men in the gospel; so that they say, I do in my conscience apprehend this to be reasonable, just, and necessary, which I am required to do by the same gospel; when this (I say) is done, the leading introductive part of the work is done. As in going about to take a rebel-garrison, there is a mighty thing done if a port be gained, and especially if the noblest port belonging to such a garrison be taken. And it is the Apostle's similitude afterwards in this Epistle, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and the subjecting every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ." The conscience or practical judgment is subjected, so that we have an end of men's counter-risings; they have nothing in their judgment to oppose, their imaginations they are gained, their notions, their thoughts, their apprehensions are certified and set right in these points. This is now a great thing, for it is the leading thing, and the introductive thing, in order to the work of conversion. The judgment, which, (I say) in reference to matters of practice, is conscience; that is the leading faculty, and when once that is gained, and a conquest is obtained over that, it is as if, in the

taking (as was said) of a rebel garrison, the counter-scarp is won, or the great port-royal is won, which is a great thing. And,

(4.) Not only when conscience is convinced is the soul so far won, gained, subdued, and brought under; but it is also turned against the rest that hold out, as if in the taking of some principal fortress; besides that the opposition from what part is gained ceaseth, suppose a battery be placed there against the rest that stands out; and this is the case, when conscience is once brought under conviction by the power and evidence of the great things of the gospel; here is a battery placed against an obstinate will, against perverse inclinations, against unruly, tumultuous affections and passions; so that now the man is made to batter himself if conscience be once convinced; but if there be an inclination in the sinner still to persist, and go on in his way of sin, he doth it at his own peril, and even at his own peril from himself, for a convinced conscience will infer this, that he must be continually battering himself, and galling himself, and shooting arrows and darts against himself.

And when the matter is once brought to this, there is some hope in the case that the sinner will turn, is like to turn, for there is not only so much of his strength gone for persevering in a sinful course, but it is turned and bent against him. Christ hath now got a party within him, and the colours of our great Lord and Redeemer are displayed in the fort-royal, he is then demanding entrance into the soul. Let the everlasting gates of the soul fly open, that the King of Glory may enter in; the kingdom of God is nigh, just at the door, even at the very door, when conscience is convinced about the great things of the gospel, the very port is taken, and the ensigns of our glorious Lord displayed there, so that it must require a great deal of obstinacy against him; now that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are so very near at the door, and the voice of the summons sounds at the gate, Sinner, surrender now to thy rightful Lord, yield or perish. If this be said to him, and he is convinced already, I have no other way but to yield or die, and there is hope of safety in yielding; this carries a great appearance that conversion is towards, the matter is drawing to a blessed issue with such a poor soul. And,

(5.) When conscience is thus gained and won upon by so immediate direct application to it in the management of this work, the way is now open for the intromitting

and setting in whatsoever considerations besides may be of any use towards the bringing of the soul to a surrender and compliance with the Lord Jesus; that closure with him wherein the work of conversion doth most formally consist and lie; a turning to the Lord, as the expression is in the close of the foregoing chapter. If conscience be convinced, then is here way made for terrible considerations to be let in upon the soul. And if conscience be convinced, here is way made for most comfortable considerations to be let in upon the soul too; the way is open to reach and apply both these great principles of fear and of hope, which are mighty engines, by which the souls of men are turned this way or that: here are all the tremendous considerations that can be thought of, for which way is open, if conscience be convinced, I am a sinner, a guilty creature, I lie obnoxious to Divine justice and revenge every moment; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, they are my portion; nothing else is due to me. And then, at the same time, if conscience be convinced of the truth of the gospel, here is an open way made for all consolatory considerations that might move the principle of hope; Christ is represented as ready to receive a returning soul. The sinner must be supposed to believe, in his own conscience, that it is most certainly true, Christ will not reject a poor soul that throws itself at his feet, as ready to perish: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." In my conscience, must the sinner say, I believe this is true: he would never have come down into this world, and become man, and have died on a cross, to save sinners, if he would throw away a soul that returns to him, and casts itself upon him: I believe, in my conscience, this is true, that as I am lost if I come not to a closure with the Son of God in believing, so I cannot but be safe if I do. Again,

(6.) There is reason for this hope that such convictions may end in conversion, because that very ministry that is thus directed to conscience, that is levelled at conscience, and hath done it with such effect already, is the ministration of the Holy Ghost, the ministration of the Spirit and life, as it is largely discoursed in the foregoing chapter throughout, and which makes the apostle say, "having this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." This ministry; what ministry? Not a dead letter, but an animated ministry; that is, (as it were,) the very vehicle of life and spirit; therefore, we faint not; therefore, we go

on with all the vigour which a lively hope can give us in our work; as if he should have said, Why should we not hope to prevail, when we apply ourselves to the spirits of men, of creatures that can understand, that can use thought? Our business doth not lie with stocks, and stones, and brutes; but we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, the very spirits of men; and we do it under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, whose ministration it is that is put into our hands; why then should we not hope to prevail? Why should we not hope, that they that come unconverted, should go away converted, at least if we can prevail upon them so far as that they are once brought to admit of conviction? And yet,

(7.) There is further reason for this hope, from what hath been done already in the same way, and by the same agency. We have read of thousands that have fallen under the power of this ministry; thousands at once, as in that, Acts ii. 37, who have been pierced to the very heart, and cried out; "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Heart doth comprehend and take in conscience there; the governing faculty, together with the governed, as is usual in scripture, to take heart in that latitude. A serious faithful servant of Christ in this work hath reason to argue thus; *Quicquid fieri potuit potest.* That which hath been done, and by the same agency, that method which hath succeeded to so happy purposes before, the like may be done again in the same way, by the same agency, and in the same method, why should not we expect, why should not we hope for it? especially if we add,

(8.) Lastly, that this ministry, in connection with the same power and presence, is promised to be continued to the end of the world: "Go and teach all nations;" I appoint you to go and make my claim to all the creation; for all power is given me, both in heaven and earth; and go you and teach all nations; disciple them, proselyte them to me; gather in the world, lay my claim for me, and in my name, to all the world, and tell men every where what I am, the Redeemer, and what I have, by my blood, the price of that redemption, purchased, even an absolute dominion and power over all the world; I died, and was buried, and rose again, that I might become Lord both of living and dead. All power hereby is consigned and made over to me, and by virtue of that power, I commission you: go forth every where, and challenge the world, upon that account, to submit to me, their rightful Lord. And

herein lies being converted, when the hearts of men are brought seriously to do so, to recognize the Redeemer's right, and to make an absolute surrender and resignation of their souls to him, and to God through him. Now this ministry, and thus attended, is promised to continue to the end of the world: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." We know very well those particular persons were to shut up their time with that age, and yet this work was always to go on till the end of time, and through all ages: and why should not we expect, who come with the same authority and commission, but that when we do, in the business of this ministry, apply ourselves directly to the consciences of men in the sight of God, there should still be some success, even as long as this world lasts, and as long as this ministry lasts, why should we not always hope? But then,

2. Supposing there be ground for such an hope, that our applying ourselves to the consciences of men, so as to convince them, may end in conversion, how doth it appear this hope is encouraging? If there be reason for this hope, is there any reason to be assigned why this hope should give courage, vigour, and liveliness, to those that are employed in this work? The evidencing that there is, will rest upon two things; 1st. that the faithful ministers of Christ do very seriously desire the conversion of souls; and, 2dly, that the hopefulness of what a man desires cannot but be a very enlivening thing to the spirit of any man. Let these two be put together, and it evidenceth our present purpose; that is, that the serious ministers of the gospel do desire the conversion of souls, and that the hopefulness of any thing that a man desires, must needs be very reviving and consolatory to him.

1. The former of these doth sufficiently speak itself; and I doubt not, in all your consciences, you never knew any minister of Christ, whom you had any reason to look upon as serious in his work, but you could not but apprehend him very much to desire the conversion of souls: for,

(1.) It is the very end of their office. How can it be but we must desire to reach the end for which our very office itself is appointed, and for which we were put into it?

(2.) The desire of the conversion of souls, it is nothing else but spiritualized humanity; that is, supposing we do believe a future state, or (as the apostle expresseth it in the

next chapter) do in any measure understand the terrors of the Lord, the terrors of the judgment day, which is there referred to; "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men. And herein we are manifest unto God, and we trust, also in your consciences." You must suppose if we should understand and know any thing of the terrors of the Lord, and of a judgment day, that we must desire the conversion of souls: you will not look upon as so inhumane creatures, that we should have a prospect before our eyes of so dreadful a destruction as unconverted souls will certainly fall into, and not desire their escape, not desire they may fly "from the wrath to come;" effectually so to fly as to escape that wrath. And again,

(3.) It is a required conformity to our blessed Lord, in whose name we come to you, whom we find to have been a mighty lover of souls. Did not his descent into this world testify it? Was not his death upon the cross the most significant? And is not the remembrance of it a standing testimony hereof? And how can we bear his name, and sustain to be called the ministers of Christ, and not mightily desire the conversion of souls? And,

2. If we do, then the hope of it cannot but be a very enlivening and encouraging thing. The hopefulness of what a man desires, and hath his heart set upon, carries the most invigorating power with it that any thing can be supposed to do. For,

(1.) It is very plain, despair of any design or undertaking, damps all endeavours. No man can rationally endeavour that whereof he hath no hope. It sinks a man's spirit to be engaged in a work in which, from time to time, he can hope to do nothing, as common experience and the reason of things do speak. And,

(2.) On the other hand, it is very plain, that hope is the great engine which keeps the world in motion, and at work every where: it is the spring of all action all the world over, and of every kind whatsoever; the intelligent world, I mean. No man propounds an end to himself, but the hope of effecting it is the very thing that sets him and keeps him on work through the whole course of that endeavour that is requisite to it. The merchant trades in hope; yea, and (go to the very meanest employment) the ploughman ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. And sure we are not in our work to deviate from the common rules that guide all mankind in every undertaking

whatsoever, and that doth influence them throughout that undertaking. Why are not we (think you) to plough in hope, and sow in hope, that we may be partakers of our hope?

Then, these two things being evident, that it is in the eyes of serious ministers of Christ a desirable thing; and that they that do seriously desire it, must needs be very much encouraged in their design and endeavour of it, when it doth appear to them an hopeful thing; so far as there is hope that the conviction that is taking hold of the consciences of men, may end in their conversion. Then this apprehension must needs contribute a great deal to their not fainting in their work, who are in good earnest engaged in it. I might add,

(2.) That it is an encouraging thing, an heart-strengthening thing, thus to apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the pursuit of this work, that however it will be as to the former thing, yet we are sure to gain, in men's consciences, a testimony for the great God. If conscience be but convinced, if we can so far recommend ourselves to the consciences of men, as that they come to be convinced, this is truth, this is duty, here lies my danger, there lies my hope. If men are in their consciences convinced of these things, and yet will go on in their destructive ways in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, we have gained this, however, that, if they will go on, if they will perish, it will be a testimony for God in their own consciences. And this will be a great thing; for, as it follows presently after, in the 5th verse of this chapter, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." Not ourselves finally, but only ourselves your servants for Jesus sake; and therefore his interest and his concernment must be greatest and highest in our eye: it is to him, therefore, we owe the principal deference and highest honour. And there will be a convincing testimony for him in your very consciences, whether you turn or not turn. If we can but prevail so far, in applying to conscience, as to convince it, you will go down with conviction into the place of torment, and thereby a testimony will be gained for our glorious Lord, that his overtures were all easy, all reasonable, all kind, and all indulgent: and this is a great thing we shall have gained, though it be but *secunda post naufragium tabula.* It is a consolation, though it be a consolation against a sad case, a very sad case, that any should descend to perdition, from under the gospel, with convinced consciences.

But no more of this at present.

SERMON VII.*

2 Corinthians, iv. 2.

Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We have considered the words, according to what they import in themselves, and we have it now in hand to consider them, according to that reference which they bear to those of the foregoing verse. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" whence we have collected,—That the application which the faithful ministers of Christ do make to the consciences of men in the sight of God, affords them very great relief and encouragement to go on with an unfainting vigour and resolution in their work; and we proposed to show that it is so, upon a double account, to wit, the convictiveness, and the sincerity of it: the convictiveness of it towards them, and the sincerity of it towards God. We have hitherto been shewing you how encouraging it is upon the former account, in respect of the convictiveness of the thing; and so it is, encouraging upon a two-fold more particular account.

1st. As thereby there is very great hope conceived of conversion. And,

2dly. As hereby a testimony is, however, gained to the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ in the very consciences of men. The former was fully insisted on; and now I go on further, to the second, to wit, That the convictiveness of such application tends to gain a testimony to our great God and Saviour in their very souls. And this is a very encouraging thing, an heart strengthening thing, to a serious faithful minister of Christ, that he shall hereby gain such a testimony in men's consciences for God and his blessed Son. They will be obliged to acknowledge and own, that the great truths of the gospel, upon which the principal weight and stress is laid, as to their salvation, do carry a clear and convictive evidence with them; and that they are required to believe nothing to this purpose, which is not most evidently true; but

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must be forced to say,—I think, in my very conscience, these things are so; they are as they are represented; I am not imposed upon; there is no fraudulency or artifice used to disguise things, or to make them seem otherwise than they are. And thus it is also with the things we are to do, and we are warned to avoid, as by no means to be done; and likewise, the constitutions and judgments we find settled and declared in the gospel concerning them that do well, and them that do ill, and that are to be the last measures of the final judgment, are all most unexceptionably equal and righteous; we have nothing to say against them, and so, concerning the whole frame and design of the gospel, that it is wisely adapted to its end; that it carries that efficacy with it, when once it takes hold of conscience, that men must say, Here is a power not to be withstood; we cannot resist the power and spirit wherewith such and such things are spoken; things come to us in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of power; they must say there is kindness and love beyond all that could be expected or conceived in the whole frame and contrivance of it: here is manifestly a design to pluck souls out of death, to reduce backsliders unto God, to save lost creatures from perishing; and upon the whole, therefore, here must be a testimony gained to the truth of God, to his authority, to the equity and reasonableness of his laws and sanctions, to his wonderful wisdom, which he hath shewn in methodizing things so as the gospel acquaints us, in order to the recovery and salvation of souls; and to his kindness, goodness, and mercifulness, towards poor perishing sinners, beyond all that could have entered into the heart of man to expect. It is plain, that when such applications are made immediately, directly, and properly to conscience, such a testimony is gained to the great God and Saviour in all these respects.

And now it is evident, that this cannot but be an encouraging thing to every serious faithful minister of Christ; for you must consider (as they will do) to whom they do belong; they consider whose they are, and whom they are obliged to serve: and if these two things be eyed and looked upon together; to wit, that glorious Lord to whom they are related, and their most entire devotedness and fidelity to him: these two things concurring, cannot but make such encouragement as this arise naturally from the above-mentioned ground.

1. It is to be considered, that the Lord, to whom they

are related, he is infinitely more than all this world; the whole creation is but a tittle, a nothing to him, his honour and glory are more worth than all things. If all this world, as it was raised up out of nothing, were presently to be reduced to nothing again, that is, a thing little to be mattered, in comparison, if we bring it into comparison with the glory of this great name: which glory will shine satisfyingly to itself, even to all eternity, whatsoever should become of this created sphere and universal thing; consider this in the state of their case. And then, consider,

2. That in the temper of their minds, there must be entire devotedness and fidelity to this great Lord: and so as the glory of his name is a greater thing in itself than all things besides, so it must be to them; because, with their relation to this great Lord, there is conjunct that most entire affection and devotedness to him, that whatever becomes of all things else, this must always be principal in their eye, the glory of the great Lord: you find, therefore, that this is the main design they drive at, and are obliged to do in all their ministrations; that is, that there be such convictions upon the consciences of men, as from whence a glory may result, "a glorious testimony unto God in Christ," saith the Apostle, (speaking of his own labours in the ministry,) "according to my expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, (that my heart should never sink through shame, nor through fear,) but that, with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Phil. iii. 17—20. If one had said to him, What need you toil and harass yourself in such labours, and to run such hazards as you do, in a continual course? What are you to gain by it? Gain, saith he, why I shall gain my point. I shall gain my great design, the only thing I am solicitous for, and the only thing, in comparison, that I aim at; that is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; whether I live, or whether I die, all is one to me; I am content to run through a thousand deaths for the glory of that name;—that that name may be glorified in my living and dying. Here is a continual glory arising to that name out of this application to men's consciences, when all men, out of conviction of conscience, must be forced to own and acknowledge the truth, and authority, and righteousness, the power, wisdom, and goodness, which are all comprehended in this great name;

and therefore, it is, that the ministers of Christ are to make this a measure to themselves, in all their ministrations, to direct them to this very end and mark; that is, the bringing men under such convictions, that a just testimony may result to this great name,—the name and honour of their glorious Lord. The Apostle's reasonings do most evidently imply this, which you find he useth in that 14th chapter of his former Epistle to these Corinthians, verse 24; he is there directing and ordering how they should order, manage, and methodize their ministrations, so as that they might be most apt to convince; that they should prefer plain instructive words, before strange tongues, though that might very much amuse, and gain to them (it may be) a great deal of applause, that such and such could speak in assemblies so many languages; but, (saith the apostle,) when the business of instruction by prophecy, (as the word must there be used, and it is frequently, when that is attended to,) if there comes in one that is unlearned, such an one is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. This, (saith the apostle,) I must have all your ministrations directed unto; you must aim at this, to carry things so, that the hitherto Pagan world, (as they shall have opportunity to observe and know what things are taught among you,) from the plain evidence of the things, may be judged and condemned in their own spirits, and may be brought down on the knee, to fall and kneel, and confess God is in the midst of this people; God is in these ministrations of a truth: you must order things so, that this end may be effectually obtained, observably gaining a testimony to God out of the consciences of those you shall have to do with; and if this be any one's end, upon which his heart is set, upon which he is principally intent, according as his success is, in order to this, his great and principal end, so will his encouragement be, and the strength and vigour of his spirit in prosecuting his work: according as his labour is either more actually successful, or hopeful, accordingly is his spirit raised up and kept up within him in his work; and this is a thing which carries its own proper right with it, whether it do fall in with the conversion of souls, or whether it be severed from it.

(1.) If it fall in with it, it adds the greater weight to it, for the poising and bearing up a man's spirit in his work;

for then this testimony ariseth so much the more clearly, and so much the more fully, when it proceeds at once from the concurrence of an enlightened mind and convinced conscience; and also, a renewed changed heart, when it is the sense of the mind, and of the heart, together. Oh, how joyful and raised a testimony do convinced and converted ones bear to the truth, and righteousness, and authority, and wisdom, and power, and grace of God in Christ? When hearts are won, with what complacency do they then celebrate all the glories that have shone forth to them with efficacy and success, through the gospel dispensation? What pleasure do they take to speak highly of his great name, whose power they have felt, whose light they have seen, whose grace they have tasted of, in and by this dispensation? But then,

(2.) If these should be severed, yet so much the greater thing is a testimony to the great God, and his Christ: that there is in that case, more to poise and weigh up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ, than there can be in the want of the other, to sink and press it down. These two things being compared with one another, the glorious testimony that is borne to this name, and the actual infelicity of a soul, which hath refused to be happy, and did peremptorily choose the way to perdition, that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death; so much a greater thing is the former of these, than the latter, that there is more to buoy up the spirit of a faithful servant of Christ in his ministerial work, than there can be to press and sink it down.

And so, upon that former account; to wit, the convictiveness of such an application to the conscience, doth very great encouragement arise to those that are faithful in their work of preaching the gospel, to go on with unfainting vigour in it, as this convictive application to conscience, both is the way to the conversion of souls; and also, as it tends to gain a testimony to the name of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, as we have to consider to this purpose the convictiveness of this application to conscience, so we have to consider well in the next place,

3. The sincerity of such application to conscience: we apply and commend ourselves to the consciences of men, in the very sight of God, under the eye of God; he sees our aim and design, and our whole transaction, from step

to step, from point to point; there is no thought in our minds, no word in our mouths to this purpose, but comes all under his immediate notice and cognizance; and hence ariseth our strength and vigour in our work, hence it is we faint not; we serve our Lord Christ, we serve the great God, to whom we have devoted ourselves under his own eye. To the sincere, it is a great consolation their sincerity is known; one may serve a man in great sincerity, and yet never be understood, for he cannot look into the thoughts, he cannot discern the intention and bent of the heart: but when every thing lies open (as we know it doth) to his immediate view, with whom we have to do, and for whom we are concerned, this is a very encouraging thing to the sincere to know that it is known. It escapes not the especial notice of his eye, in whose approbation and complacency we are most of all concerned; for hereupon, these two most encouraging things do most necessarily succeed and follow;—1st. That by this, their sincerity, they are directly and immediately in a good posture towards God, so as to receive the highest encouragement from him. And, 2dly. They are consequentially, by most manifest and direct consequence, in a good state towards men; so as at least, from them not to receive any hurtful or sinking discouragement: I say, it puts their affairs into a good posture towards God, from whom they are to have the highest encouragement; and it puts them consequentially into so good a posture towards men, as that, from thence, they shall receive no hurtful, heart-dejecting, or heart-sinking discouragement. As to God, 1st. As to the former, the posture and state wherein it puts their affairs towards God, is, 1st. They are sure of acceptance. And, 2dly. They are sure of reward; be the success of their ministration what it will or can be supposed to be, or the worst that can be supposed.

They shall be accepted with God, and shall not lose their reward, whatever the issue of their labour be. Some scriptures do conjoin these together, or give us good ground upon which to apprehend the certain conjunction of them, that they are not severed one from another, as in the nature of the thing we are sure they cannot be. Do but observe to this purpose that known and famous place, Isaiah xlix. 5. It is spoken directly and principally of our great Lord himself; but it is applicable, in a subordinate sense, most justly unto all that do serve under him. In the third verse of that chapter, it is said, "Thou art my

servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." And verse 4th. "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." That name of Israel is put upon him, as sometimes, elsewhere, the name of Jacob is, as signifying Christ-mystical, and comprehending all his people with him and in him. "Then I said, I have laboured in vain; yet, surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob to him: Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." I shall not stay to dilate (as I might with much point) upon this scripture. Again, look back to the 2nd chapter of this epistle, where our text lies, and you will see, from the 14th verse onward, much to this same purpose. The apostle speaks of the pleasant savour which the faithful ministers of Christ do carry with them in their ministrations, or in respect to the gospel which they dispense, both in reference to them that are saved, and in reference to them that perish. "Thanks be to God, (saith he,) which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, (and they that triumph in Christ are far from fainting,) and maketh manifest by us, the savour of his knowledge in every place: for we are to God, a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, we are the savour of life unto life." It is true that we are so; a sweet savour of God in Christ to the one and the other, or in reference to the one and the other. And where there is a certain acceptation, there is a certain reward, which, when our Lord himself did eye, we are not disallowed to eye, you may be sure; "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of God." Heb. xii. 3. That great and eminent servant of his, Moses, it is recorded of him, not as a blemish, but to his honour, that he had respect to the recompence of reward. Heb. xi. 7. And the apostle Paul tells concerning himself, when he avowed himself to be the apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, (as in the beginning of his epistle to Titus,) he adds, "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised;" as if he would, by that answer an inquiry, which (it may be) some, who had heard of his name, might wonderingly make, What should be the matter that Paul, that wise man, that

learned man, that man so strenuous an assertor of Judaism, and so devoted to the strictest sect of Pharisaism, should suffer himself to be imposed upon, so as to espouse the despised Christian name and interest? He, it seems, is become a minister of the gospel of Christ, a servant of him that was crucified at Jerusalem not long ago, as a common malefactor; how comes such an one as Paul to espouse that interest and profess that name? Why, I do it, (saith he,) "in hopes of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised." Here is enough to keep me from fainting and sinking in this work, may a faithful minister of Christ say, notwithstanding whatsoever of labour and toil it carries in it; and, notwithstanding whatsoever inconvenience it may draw after it; it is all in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. And they know their Master and Lord that employs them, that he who will not suffer so mean a thing as a cup of cold water, to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to lose its reward, will never let a devoted life, spent in his service, and in an endeavour of serving that great design of his, which his heart doth so appear to be always set upon the saving of souls, to lose a correspondent reward: therefore, such sincerity, in applying to the consciences of men in the sight of God, knows who sees it, who judgeth of it, carries in it encouragement enough, directly God-ward, and Christ-ward, from whom they are encouraged, and principally concerned to expect and seek it. But,

As to men. 2dly. It carries enough in it by consequence, to fortify them against every thing of discouragement from men. What is there from men to discourage? principally two things, reproach and danger. They may be liable to reproach, but sincerity is a guard against it. "According to my earnest expectation, and my hope," (saith the Apostle,) "that in nothing I shall be ashamed." Phil. i. 20. And so in the words immediately before the text, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty or shame, (as the word may be rendered;) not walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending," &c. And, as in the close of the 2nd chapter of this epistle, "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God," (adulterate it *caupoinzeing* it,) "but as of sincerity, as of God speak we in Christ." We do nothing we need to be ashamed of, as long as we do but apply ourselves about such things as carry their own evidence in them to the consciences of

men. Our work admits well enough to be done above board; we need seek no corner, no darkness, no shadow of death, wherein to lie hid; we may well go open faced in all that we do; we have no other design, but to convince men, and bring them back from their destructive ways, and finally, become instruments of their being safe and happy.

And then for any thing of danger; it is true, they may be liable thereto, even from them whom they do convince: convictions do sometimes work that unnatural way, that is, to enrage, to exasperate; we read of some who were pricked to the heart, who cried out thereupon, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. We read of others cut to the heart by that sermon of the first martyr, Stephen. Acts vii. 54. And they, thereupon, immediately gnash their teeth; and their business is to gather up stones, and stone him to death. This, it is true, may be, and admit it to be so, the sincere desire of his glory for whom they so expose themselves in their ministration, approving itself to his very eye, carries enough in it to fortify them against the most formidable appearances of this kind. The apostle makes this supposition, even of running the hazard of a fiery trial; when he is exhorting them that speak, "To speak as becomes the oracles of God." 1 Peter iv. 11. And with this same design, that our great Lord, for whom we speak, may be glorified, may have a glorious testimony arising to him. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." And the very next words are, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is sent to try you;" never be concerned for yourselves, though there be danger of a fiery trial incurred, if you can but be conscious to yourselves of your own sincerity, that you speak as becomes the oracles of God, with this design, that God and our Lord Jesus may be glorified." And so doth the transaction of all this affair, in the sight of God, carry with it a great matter of encouragement; that is, sincerity puts our affairs directly into the best posture that can be wished, towards God and Christ; and leaves them not in so ill a posture towards men, as that any thing should be feared from them, or can possibly arise from them, to cause dejection or despondency of spirit, in any one who is with such sincerity engaged in this great work.

USE. Therefore, now briefly to apply all:—there are sundry things, which it is obvious to collect and gather from all that hath been said to this point, that may be very useful and instructive to us. As,

1. That such as are sincerely, and with due seriousness, engaged in the work of the ministry, they cannot but be solicitous about the issue of their work, how it will succeed, what will become of it; they do, (it is true,) through the mercy of God, go on in their work without fainting, as it is their business to apply themselves to the consciences of men, in the sight of God; but yet, with very great concern; for what do they apply themselves to the consciences of men about? It is about things upon which their salvation depends,—it is, that they may not be lost. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." We consider them as perishing creatures, if our gospel should be hid from them; therefore, we make it our business to apply ourselves to their consciences, in the sight of God, that it may not be hid. And hence is our not fainting; it shews in those that do seriously concern themselves, and serve Christ in the work of the ministry: there is great solicitude about the issue of their work, lest souls should miscarry and be lost under it.

2. We may collect, that the true reason of this solicitude is the uncertainty of the issue; they do not know how matters will succeed with them about whom they are concerned. It may be life, it may be death; it may be they will be saved, it may be they will be lost; some may be the one, some may be the other. Seeing that they need support against fainting, it shews that they are solicitous, and whence their solicitude doth arise, and what is the true cause of it; and though it is true indeed, there is support from the consciousness of their own sincerity, and from the aptitude of such means as they use, that souls may not be lost; yet, all this while, the dubiousness and uncertainty of the event doth so much deject them, and make them liable to fainting, that they reckon it a very great mercy that they do not faint: "therefore, having such a ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." It is the mercy of God to us that we sink not, nor faint in our work, to think how little hold is taken upon the consciences of men, and how apt men are to run counter to the conviction of their own consciences. It is God's great mercy we do not faint, and quite give off, and say, we will never speak in this name more, to be so little heard, regarded, attended

to, and complied with in the design of all that we say. And again,

3. We may gather hence, that God hath so graciously ordered the matter, that the very cause of a faithful minister's solicitude shall yield him the matter of his relief; that is, his sincerity, his applying himself to the consciences of men in the sight of God. It is a man's sincerity in this case, that makes him be concerned, for they that are insincere, will never be concerned; they care not what becomes of their hearers, if they can but discourse plausibly an hour when they must, they are little further concerned. But then, (I say,) observe the goodness of God, that from the same thing, whence their concern comes, their relief comes; that is, their sincerity; if they were not sincere, they would not be concerned: but, because they are sincere, thereby they are relieved, they transact all in the sight of God; and so, the same thing that gives them trouble, gives them relief.

4. We may further gather hence, that where there is the least need of relief, there is the least to be had. They have no need of relief against any solicitude, and heart-affecting concern, about the issue and success of their work, who are not sincere in it; and thereupon they have not that relief which otherwise would arise in this case. These things do measure one another: where no relief is needful, none is had. They need no relief, where there is no concern; and they have none, because they are not sincere. And again,

5. It is plain, that the safety of souls that do attend upon the gospel dispensation, and the comfort of their ministers, do very much depend upon the same thing; that is, the successfulness of the application to conscience in the sight of God. If conscience be first convinced, and thos convictions be complied with, and answered in the inclination of the heart, and course of the outward practice, such souls are safe and happy; and, according to the prospect and appearance that can be had hereof, those who are engaged in this great design of saving them, are relieved and comforted so much abundantly the more; their fullest consolation, and the salvation and happiness of the souls they are concerned for, meet in the same point. And therefore, again,

6. If any do miscarry under the gospel, by which, and in the ministration whereof, applications are still made to their consciences in the sight of God, they perish under a

double guilt, as having not only been accessary to their own ruin, but to the discouragement, as much as in them lies, of those in their work, that were intent upon saving them. And this is a double guilt,—guilty of their own ruin, and guilty of the sorrow and solicitude, and afflicting care and grief, of them that would have saved them. And that this consideration doth not weigh nothing, you may plainly see, in that such use is made of it, as we find elsewhere. This apostle urgeth the Christians, Philipp. ii. 16. that they would demean themselves, "as sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they lived, and shined as lights in the world:" that, as light was, through the word of God in the gospel, let into their consciences, it might shine through again in their conversations, that they might hold forth the word of life; and why? upon what design or consideration? "That we may be comforted," that we may rejoice, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. Whatsoever greater weight there was to be in the consideration of their own salvation, and eternal well-being, this consideration also was not without its weight; it cannot be said of it, that it had no weight. That we may rejoice, too, and rejoice with you, in the day of Christ, as not having run in vain, or laboured in vain. But, in the last place,

7. We may further collect, that, if there be a final disappointment as to any, so that (as the expression is after the text) they come at length to be "lost;" and here is the utmost cause given, that can be given from men, of discouragement and heart-fainting to the ministers of Christ; yet all doth proceed from men's baffling their consciences: these dreadful consequences do result from thence. If men would but use their consciences, and be true to their consciences; if they would but receive the truth whereof conscience is convinced, and comply with the precepts and rules that conscience doth discern the equity and necessity of, all would be well; we should be comforted, and you would be saved. But if neither of these be, you see whence all proceeds; it is from baffling of conscience, from either it's not admitting of conviction, or it's not complying with conviction that hath been admitted. Therefore, I shall shut up all with this only double word of counsel; that is,

1. That you labour to keep conscience always awake, and bring it awake to such attendances upon the dispensation of the preaching of the gospel; labour aforehand to pre-engage conscience; tell your souls beforehand, when

you are to come to such an assembly as this, O my soul, thou art going to a place where thy conscience is to be dealt withal, and in the sight of God! there is a great transaction to lie between thee and some or other servant of Christ, and the whole business is managed under the divine eye; then say to thy conscience, Awake! awake! be in a prepared posture, in a ready posture: let me not carry conscience slumbering, conscience dreaming, conscience in a deep sleep, unto such an ordinance, but labour to have it awake, in order hereunto: and that it may be so, urge upon it those former heads. That you may bring wakeful consciences to these holy assemblies, from time to time, you are very much concerned to keep them awake all the week long: if, from day to day, and from morning to night, you will buy and sell without conscience, and eat and drink without conscience, and manage your affairs in your families without conscience, then it is likely you will come without conscience, or with a drowsy slumbering conscience, on the Lord's day, to the assembly too; you will find conscience on those days as you use it on other days. And then,

2. When you are under these holy assemblies, and particularly under the ministration of the gospel, labour then to keep conscience in actual exercise, endeavour that your consciences may go along with all that is said, and put them on giving their assent, their actual assent: take it from them, that so you may be (as it were) preaching to yourselves all the while the minister is preaching to you; that conscience may be preaching over and over again; that there may be an echo within from conscience, repeating the very voice of the minister in your own hearts; and if this were done, if there were such a conscientious attendance upon this holy ministration, with respect to the eye that observes you, as well as us, and a design all along driven to one and the same purpose, to approve ourselves to that eye, we might hope somewhat would come of our having the gospel so long continued among us, and of having our holy assemblies, with so much freedom to resort unto. But if nothing of this be, but still conscience must be kept asleep from duty to duty, there is nothing to be said, but that hereafter it will awake for torment.

SERMON VIII.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

UPON what hath been so largely discoursed to you from the immediately foregoing words, I know not how to overlook these, that are so immediately and apparently subjoined. Though they have much of terror in them, they may have much use, and may be useful (even as they are terrible) to promote and help our escape from that most terrible issue of things that they import. The reasonableness of their connexion with the foregoing words, is obvious to every eye: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The reason of the thing speaks itself. If we do insist upon such matters as do carry in them a convictive self-recommending evidence to every man's conscience; if we do directly and immediately apply ourselves to the very consciences of men, in all our ministrations; if we endeavour to draw them into the Divine presence, and manage all our transactions with their very consciences, under God's immediate eye, and debate matters with their consciences before the throne of God; if this be our way of treating with the souls of men, so as that when they do not hear us, —will not listen to us, we do arrest them, we do arraign them; Come, I must have you into the presence of God, and debate the matter with you, under the eye of him that made you, and that made me: if this be the course of our dealing with souls, and they will not hear, and our gospel remains to them yet an hidden thing, it is all one to them, as if we had said nothing; if it "be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." This is the plain series of the discourse in this context.

And so the import of the words, in themselves, is as plain

* Preached March 22, 1690—91.

as any other words a man can make use of. This is the doctrine.

Doctrine. They to whom the gospel of Christ is an hidden gospel, they are lost souls.

In speaking to this, we are, 1st, to open to you the meaning of the gospel's being hid, the thing supposed here; and, 2dly, to shew what is meant by being lost, the thing asserted upon that supposition; and then to show, 3dly, the connexion between the one and the other of these, upon which the use of the whole will ensue.

1. What is meant by the gospel's being hid? It may be said to be hidden several ways, according to the several ways wherein it may be said to be revealed. And there is a fourfold gradation to be taken notice of in the revealing of the gospel, or the things contained in the gospel, unto men, as there is a fourfold principle that is herein to be applied unto. As,

(1.) There is the principle of external sense, unto which the gospel is first to be brought. "Faith comes by hearing," (Romans x. 17.) as the apostle tells us. And then,

(2.) There is the principle of understanding and intellect, unto which that hearing is subservient and introductive: men are to hear, that they may understand; and it is a plague and doom upon them, when they hear and do not understand. And,

(3.) There is a principle of conscience, which is the mind and understanding, as it hath to do with practical matters; (as we have formerly told you;) being to judge concerning them, either as things to be done, or as things that have been done. And so we judge, either by way of prospect, or retrospect: as you have heard, conscience is the principle, and as such a principle, it is to be applied unto: so much we have lately insisted upon to you. And then,

(4.) Another principle is the heart, at which the gospel revelation doth finally and terminatively aim. It aims more immediately at conscience, but ultimately, and finally, at the very heart, as you see afterwards in this very context: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." But how should it shine into them? or what of them should it shine into? The sixth verse tells you, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,

hath shined into our hearts to give us the light;" so that there are these several steps in the revelation of the gospel, or of the things contained in the gospel, unto men.

1. By the external sense, that by which that discovery is to be transmitted to the mind or understanding. And that it may be excluded, and shut out from thence, the god of this world is mightily industrious to blind men's minds, that the gospel may meet with a stop there; not make its entrance so far. And then,

2. It is further aimed at to be revealed to men's consciences, that through the mind it may strike conscience, and fasten convictions upon men there, concerning what they are to do, or what they are not to do, or what they have, or what they have not done, or what they are thereupon to expect God to do, or not to do, against them, or for them. And then,

3. Finally, the gospel is to be revealed to the very hearts of men. He that hath made the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone into our hearts, wherein the design of the god of this world is defeated and disappointed; so that the beams of gospel light do strike through, (notwithstanding all the resistance and opposition he makes in the minds and consciences of men,) and, at length penetrating to the heart, hath shone into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And, accordingly, these several ways may the gospel be said to be hid. As,

1. When it is never preached to a people at all; so the great things that it contains, and unfolds in itself, they remain a great and continued secret, as they may have done long to many a people, and yet do to very many. In that sense, for several foregoing ages, the gospel had been an unrevealed thing, as we are told by the apostle, Romans xvi. 25. "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." That gospel which had been so long kept secret, it became then revealed, when the preaching of it was set on foot, even in all the several nations, by permission, there being no restraint, no prohibition, to preach it to any nation; no nation being excluded, but a commission given to preach it to all inde-

finitely; that is, to any, as there should be opportunity. Now, it is said to be, in that sense, an hidden gospel, the same thing that we have elsewhere: "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, (Colossians i. 26.) which is Christ in you, (or among you,) the hope of glory." That is one sense wherein the gospel is an hidden gospel. Where it is not so much as preached, nor hath been; where the external dispensation of it hath never come, there hath been no application made to men's external sense by it, or concerning it. This is not the direct intendment of the apostle here; he speaks to them whom he supposeth to have had the gospel hitherto, and at this time to have it. We are, in the gospel dispensation, actually applying ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, and yet he supposeth the gospel to be hid. It is not hidden, therefore, in that sense; or its being so hid, that is here meant.

2. It may be hid when it is (though preached) not understood: and though it be revealed to the external sense, it is not revealed to the minds of men: and so, though there be an external light, there still needs an internal one, to make it, in the useful and designed sense, a revealed gospel. So it often is, that men may sit very long underneath the dispensation of this gospel, and yet remain very ignorant of the true import and meaning, even of the most principal and noble part of it, and which it is of the greatest concern for them to understand. The frame and scheme of gospel truth and notions, it may have found no place in the minds of many that have long sat under the dispensation of it. They may have been yet ignorant (as the apostle speaks to those Christian Hebrews) which be the first principles of the oracles of God, though they had the gospel long with them, whose design it is to acquaint them with, and instruct them in, these things. They may be such as the apostle elsewhere speaks of, as are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. And though they have this gospel among them,—they have this book in their hands, yet it is a sealed book, and they have never concerned themselves to get it unsealed: they read it, and yet it is sealed; they open it, and yet it is shut; really shut up. If one say to them, Understandeth thou what thou readest? they do not. They hear the word as a tale that is told, that passeth through their ears, but en-

ters not into their minds; so may things be said to be hid that get not so far; they pass not the tegument or involucrum of a dark mind, a blind mind that admits them not. The expression is of that import, in reference to a particular thing, that our Saviour had been discoursing of to his disciples often, when he was among them. It is said, that the saying did not enter into their minds, for it was hid from them: "They understood not this saying, and it was hidden from them, that they perceived it not." Luke ix. 45. The business was what he had foretold them of again and again, touching his own approaching sufferings: it met with obstructed minds; they could not endure to hear with that ear. There was the same sense latent with them all, which Peter was more alert and open in owning and speaking: "Master, favour thyself, these things shall not be unto thee." They who had so high an expectation of his temporal reign and kingdom, such a thing as this, though he had told it them over and over, and told them again, in this chapter, upon his transfiguration, or a little after, that such and such things he must suffer, such and such things should be done to him, it entered not into their minds, they perceived it not, it passed as water glides over a rock, that admits it not. And so it is with the greatest and most important truths of the gospel that can be spoken about, that can be brought under their notice. Commonly they do give them the hearing when they come to such assemblies: they hear of the lost undone state of sinners, as they are such, and that there is reconciliation to be had by a Redeemer; but that Redeemer must and will have the throne; have their hearts changed, and their natures renewed. God's kingdom must be set up in their souls, and in its power take place in them; and sensual lusts and inclinations must go down, be subdued, and brought under. Men hear such things, but they do not enter into their minds, they will not allow them to sink into their minds; and so they hear them as if they heard them not. It cannot be said, they were never told them, that they never heard them. The first passage towards the heart, the ear, there the word goes through; but at the mind, there, with many it stops. They do not, that is, they will not, bend their minds and understandings to take in so plain and so important things. And,

3. The gospel, it may be hid from conscience; so, as though it do enter into the mind, there it meets with another obstruction; conscience excludes and shuts it out.

Many will not allow themselves so much as to understand any thing of it; as many, too, will not allow themselves so much as to hear it,—keep quite out of the hearing: but if it be heard, and if it be understood, yet here, at this third passage, which it should have to the heart, it meets with obstruction; that is, conscience doth not admit of conviction about it, a conviction of what is to be done, or what hath been misdone, or unduly omitted to be done, and what is due hereupon in point of vindication of the jealous holy God. In this respect, the gospel may still be an unrevealed gospel; that is, that it doth not get into the consciences of men, so as to strike them with conviction about these things, and to make them see and determine, and pronounce a judgment within themselves: This and that, and the other thing, an holy righteous God hath required me to do, that I might live, is all equal, and righteous, and good. It is so far an unrevealed gospel to them, that men will not be brought to see this, though it be never so plain; or again, to see that what I ought to have done, in order to my being in a reconciled state, and a safe and happy state, towards God, I have hitherto not done. I have not exercised repentance towards God; I have not believed on the Son of God; I have not come to a covenant closure with God in Christ; one thing or other, from day to day, hath shifted these important matters off: though I have heard, indeed, such and such things should be done, yet so much of life-time is worn away with me, and I could never find the hour, the leisure time, when to get into a corner, to enter into my closet, and shut myself up with God, and say, I am now come to thee about the affairs of my soul; to make over a soul unto thee, according to the tenor of thine own covenant, and there solemnly to take hold of that covenant, and give up that soul. "They gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." 2 Cor. viii. So plain a thing as this is, the yielding themselves unto God, conscience will not see it, and be convinced, that thus it ought to be; but days, and months, and years, are worn out under the gospel, and so great things as these omitted. Men are continually called upon to turn, that they may live; but they never find a time to turn. They will not settle this judgment with a convinced conscience, I must break off this course, or I am undone; that is, a course of estrangement from God, a living without God in the world. The gospel is, in this sense, a hid and unrevealed gospel; it doth not go so far

as to take hold of conscience, though conscience is applied and appealed unto, from time to time. And then,

4. It is hid from their hearts, and that is another sense wherein the gospel may be an unrevealed gospel, as it is not yet effectually discovered; or the great things contained in it, are not with a penetrating light pierced into the heart, which is the thing the gospel dispensation doth finally aim at. As you have it in this very context, the thing designed is, that through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, the heart may be at last invaded, and the light of the gospel may seat itself there, in that very centre of the soul, and so there become vital light, diffusive of power, and influence through the whole man: and this is yet an heavier case, when conscience is convinced, and yet the hearts of men are not struck, not struck through; the word doth not strike into them, as our Saviour said to the Jews: "My word hath no place in you:" you do not give it a place, it cannot find room; there is a resisting heart, that excludes and shuts it out.

It is in these latter senses that the gospel must be understood to be spoken of as an hidden gospel here, as the mind understands it not, or as the conscience is not convinced of it, or as the heart doth not entertain or give reception to it. You find, in the foregoing chapter, that the case of the Jews being spoken unto, upon the occasion of that comparison, which the apostle had been making, in the whole of that chapter, between the Mosaical or Judaical, (2 Cor. iii.) and the evangelical dispensation, he gives the preference (as there was cause) to the evangelical dispensation, far above the Mosaical and Judaical, in this respect, that there was a clearness which went with the gospel dispensation, which did not accompany the Mosaical one; and, likewise, that there was a power and efficacy that went with the gospel, that went not with the law. Towards the latter end of the foregoing chapter, he discourseth to them, that, in opposition to the former dispensation, there was a clearness of light in the latter dispensation. Whenever the law was read among the Jews, it was a veiled thing: he refers to that which is an usage among them, at this day, when the law is read, to have a veil covering them, as I have seen, (and it is like many of you have seen,) looking into their synagogues: but the apostle, you see, speaks there of the veil on the heart; which, as the former doth import opposition to the clearness and perspicuity of light, that did shine in the gospel dispensation, this speaks somewhat

opposite to that efficacy and power upon the heart, which did accompany that dispensation too; so as that souls should be transformed and changed by it, into the image and glory of it. "We all with open face, beholding, as in a glass;" so we read it, and we read it with disadvantage, considering the similitude that he had made use of before: for the word we read *open,* signifies unveiled, he having been, a little while before, speaking of the veil. "We all, with unveiled face, (so it should be, to make the matter clearer, though the sense be the same,) behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord:" but, for that poor people, they had a veil not only upon their faces, but a veil upon their hearts, so as that nothing should enter there. But when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away: when *it* shall, the expression is impersonal; when there shall be a turning to the Lord; when the season of the general turning of that people to the Lord shall be, the veil shall be done away. And now we, for the present, with unveiled face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image. And when the gospel is hid in this sense, it is a very dismal thing; that is, that it should go through the ear, and through the mind, and through the conscience, and, after all this, stop at the very heart. A veil enwrapping the heart, shuts it up: light shines, shines round about in the external dispensation, shines into the mind, things are competently understood; shines into the conscience, and that is convinced that those things are true and right which the gospel doth hold forth; and my practice, in reference thereunto, hath been wrong, injurious, altogether inexcusable, and, consequently, unsafe: and yet the heart holds out; this last fort yet surrenders not, is not taken; the glory of the gospel is not revealed there, doth not shine into the heart, so as there to take in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; as the 6th verse of this chapter speaks.

You may be sure, if there be a revelation in the last sense, there is a revelation in all the foregoing senses. If the gospel be thus revealed in the very heart, then we may be sure it was in the conscience, it was so in the mind and understanding, and it hath been so in the external discovery and dispensation of the gospel to the ear and outward sense. But if it hath not been revealed in the first of these senses, it is in none of the rest. If you speak by way of affirmation, the affirmation of the last implies the affirmation of all the former; if you speak by way of negation, the nega-

tion of the first implies the negation of all the consequents.

But as was told you at first, on this occasion, that it is not the hiddenness of the gospel, in the first sense, as having never been heard and preached, that is intended here; but in the latter sense it is chiefly meant; that is, if persons who hear this gospel, never understanding it; or, understand it, but are never convinced of it; or are convinced of it, and their hearts are never altered, never effectually changed by it,—then is the gospel an hidden gospel to them in the sense here meant.

And so the hiddenness of the gospel, in the intended sense, may be two-fold; or may be considered under two distinct notions, either as sinful, or as penal.

1. As sinful. And in the first sense, (which I have told you is not meant,) ordinarily, the gospel cannot be said to be hid in a sinful sense. Those that live in the remotest parts and quarters of the world, it is not their sin that they have not the gospel, while there was no means or opportunities of their ever having it; nor will it be charged upon them, where there was a simple impossibility of coming by that knowledge, which the gospel contains, or is the means of; it will never be imputed as their sin, that they had it not. As it is said in reference to the law, (and indeed, by the law there is meant the whole revelation of the mind and will of God;) "They that sin without the law, shall be judged without the law; and so, they that have sinned without the gospel, shall be judged without the gospel; they that have sinned with the law, shall be judged by the law; and they that have sinned against the gospel, shall be judged by the gospel." Law is there taken in that sense, for that revelation of the mind of God, which is superadded to natural light; "They that have sinned without this, shall be judged without this; and they that have sinned under it or against it, shall be judged by it." There will be no excuse to them from punishment, if they have violated and resisted that law and light which they had; if they go about to excuse themselves, any of them that way, I had not an express written law; when you sinned without law, you shall suffer without law. It will be but a like case with that of the soldiers' excuse to the commander, Pericles, the Athenian General, when he charged him with a fault, and asked him how he came to

do it, *invitus feci, invitus ergo pœnas dabis.* "I did it unwillingly," and you shall, therefore, suffer unwillingly.

But the great iniquity is, or then is the gospel hid in a sinful sense, when men have it among them, or may have it, and will not hear it; or do hear it, and never understand it; that is, never apply or set themselves to understand it; or receive no conviction from it, or receive no suitable impression on their hearts from it. Thus, all the while, is the gospel hid to them by their own iniquity, that they do voluntarily make resisting efforts against it, as every thing of sin must have somewhat of *voluntarium* in it; it supposeth, that otherwise, a brute agent might be as capable of sin as a rational one, and that cannot be. But here lies the iniquity, that men might understand, and they will not; might consider and be convinced, and they will not; and there is a natural faculty that should turn them, even in their very hearts, but there is a sinful disinclination, and they will not turn: for it is the will that is not turned; "You will not come to me that you might have life." And so, when the gospel is hid, it is hid, not because men cannot see, but because they will not; they do (as it were) pretend the veil; stretch forth the veil before their eyes, or bind it close over their own eyes, hoodwink themselves that they will not see.

As the case is stated by the apostle: "Alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; and because of the blindness of their hearts, through the ignorance that is in them." Ephes. iv. 18. But what kind of ignorance is that? See how it is paraphrased,—it is a blindness of heart,—it is a blindness, because they will not see, a voluntary affected blindness: and this makes the hiddenness of the gospel to be so in a sinful sense, for here is *voluntarium* in the case; the same thing that we find spoken in reference to natural light in the pagan world; that is, that there was that which might be known of God among them, it was manifest in them, for God had revealed it to them, or among them, as the particle there used may signify: but they liked not to retain God in their knowledge. Rom. i. 20—28. As it there follows; "That knowledge was ungrateful to them, and an unwelcome thing to them; and, therefore, they fence against it, and exclude it from among them, what they can, as a man, would keep off fire from his bosom; such was the light of

God which shone to them; "Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness will not comprehend it." John iii. 19. The minds of men do fortify themselves against this light, as much as in them is: so in reference to gospel light too, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world." John iii. 19. Here was supervening light, accessary light, come into the world; "But men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And so the gospel is an hidden thing to them, because they do exclude it, even to the very uttermost; stop it where they can stop it, either by not understanding it, or not considering it, or by not admitting conviction about it, or by not obeying from the heart. And then,

2. Being thus far sinfully hidden, it comes also to be penally hidden by a *nemesis*, hidden by a just *vindicta;* ye will not understand, then ye shall not understand; you will harden your hearts against light, against grace, and against the design of the gospel, and they shall be hardened; that is, God doth only say, "I will let you have your own design:" he doth harden, *non pertinudo Malihiham, sed non impertiendo gratiam;* as Austin's apt speech was of old, to that sense; you do make it your business to harden your hearts, and fence and fortify them against the light and grace of the gospel; and since you will have it so, so let it be. So long (it may be) a contest hath been driven on with such souls; but at last, God sees fit to recede, to retire, to give off; now you have conquered, enjoy your victory: these are victories, that undo men, that tend to their ruin. We are never to suppose, that the doom passeth before the desert, such a doom as that especially; "Let them that be filthy, be filthy still; they that are unjust, be unjust still." Rev. xxii. "And when I would have purged you, and you would not be purged, your iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die." Ezekiel. But when that hath been persisted in long and highly, as the case was, in reference to the old world, it comes to this at last, "My spirit shall not always strive with men." Gen. vi. 3. God did contend long, even by his Spirit, against the wickedness of an apostate world, till at length, a deluge and flood comes; and a little before that, the determination goes forth; "My Spirit shall no longer strive with man:" I see men are intent upon perishing, they will be lost, let them be lost: I have been striving with them so long, and they will have that course that ends in perishing;

my Spirit shall give them obstruction in their way no longer." And this was the determination, at length, in reference to that people of the Jews, that peculiar people that he singled out from the rest of the world; he bore their manners long, he contended with them long, while they always resisted the Holy Ghost; (as Stephen tells them;) "As your fathers did, so do ye." Acts vii. 51. Implying this to be, with that people, an intailed war upon their posterity, with the Spirit of God: you do but keep up a war against the Divine Spirit from age to age, as your fathers did before you; "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, till he turns and fights against them, and becomes their enemy." Isaiah lxiii. 9. But what did things come to in this contest, between the Spirit of God, and the fathers of this people, to whom Stephen speaks? Why, in reference to them, it comes at last to that terrible doom, which we have in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, and 10th verse. All that goes before in that chapter, is nothing else but a terrible preparation for that awful solemnity, of pronouncing this doom. Here is a glorious appearance of the great God in the temple, in the very year of King Uzziah's death, of which you may read in the known story; "I saw" (saith the Prophet) "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the seraphims, each of them had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." One of these seraphims crying to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory." Here is a most magnificent, splendid, and glorious appearance; And what was it for? What was the design of it? The prophet is called forth, he is astonished at the sight, and cries out, "Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Well, he is fortified, being almost sunk in his spirits upon the terrible majestic glory of this appearanae. One of the seraphims flies to him, with a live coal in his hand, lays it on his mouth, toucheth his lips, tells him his iniquity is purged away. Well, what is after all this? Now, saith God, "Thou art thus prepared, I have a message for thee to go upon." And what is that? Why, saith he, "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and their ear heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with

their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted and be healed." This is the design of this glorious appearance, and this solemn message, after this august manner; a thing, that might even shake the foundation of heaven and earth, to have the case represented and in view, as really it was: and you find that this very thing, this passage in this chapter, it is with the greatest awfulness imaginable, reiterated again and again in the New Testament: several times by our Saviour, and at length by the Apostle Paul, when finally testifying at Rome against that more perverse infidelity of this people, than ever he met with among Pagans; as indeed, it was always observable of them, they were more high, and haughty, and peremptory, and malicious, in their unbelief. Some, indeed, (when the apostle had convened them together at his dwelling house in Rome,) believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not. "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed." (Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27.) After the apostle had spoken our word; and it is this terrible word repeated and recollected; "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Isaiah the Prophet, to our fathers; Go unto this people, and say, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not; for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and they should be converted, and I should heal them." This the matter may come to, conversion and healing; and I am speaking to you, to represent it to you, that it may come to this, on purpose to prevent (if God will) the other ever doing so; and if it be considered seriously, and taken to heart, as the importance of such a case doth require; it will never come to this sad issue among you. If there be none of you that do bend your minds, and fortify your consciences, and obdure your own hearts against the truth, and against the grace, and against the gospel of our Lord, things will have a better issue with you; they shall issue in things "that accompany salvation, though I thus speak." Heb. vi. 9.

SERMON IX.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

WE have shewn (and the matter is in itself plain) how these words relate to those that go before; that, in as much as it is the design of the faithful ministers of Christ, in the course of their ministry, to commend themselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; and that the great things that they deal with men about, are therefore supposed to be such as do carry in them a self-recommending evidence to men's consciences, as you have heard they do; that in this state of the case, things being thus, if yet the gospel do remain an hidden gospel, those to whom it is so, must be lost souls; and that is it, which is with us the ground of discourse from these words, to wit,

Doctrine. That the gospel being hid to them, who continually live under it, is a very sad token of their being lost; it was propounded in speaking of this to open to you.

1. In what sense the gospel may be said, and is here meant to be hid.

2. To shew what this being lost must mean.

3. What connexion there is between these two,—The gospel being hid to any, and their being lost. And then the use will ensue.

The first we have shewed already, what is meant hereby, the gospel's being hid. We are now next to shew you.

2. What this being lost doth signify. In general, it is not an external or temporal ruin that is here spoken of, but a spiritual and eternal one: it is the soul's being lost, and lost for ever, which is manifestly the thing here meant; that being lost, which doth certainly ensue upon blindness of mind, infidelity, and exclusion of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, as the following words shew; and which, therefore, shews that it must be a spiritually eternal ruin that is here meant. But that being the meaning

* Preached, March 29, 1691.

in the general, we must know that men may be lost two ways; that is either actually, as it is with them who are already in hell, on whom the infernal pit hath already shut its mouth; or else as they are liable and tending to such a ruin. And it must be in this latter sense that they are spoken of as lost here, to whom the gospel is an hidden gospel. It is spoken for the warning of survivors, and to make such look about them that do as yet live fruitless lives, and are unimpressed under the gospel, which in the name of the eternal God is from time to time preached to them. And nothing is more ordinary, either in scripture or in common speech, than to speak of men as lost who are in visible tendency unto destruction, though they are not yet actually destroyed. Now for this liableness to be lost, or this tendency to destruction that is here manifestly meant, and in respect whereof those here spoken of may be said to be lost; that may again be twofold: that is, either it may be such a liableness to destruction as is common to the apostate children of men as such: or else that liableness to destruction which is special with some more than others, or as having somewhat peculiar in it which renders their case worse than the common case. In the former sense all the apostate world is spoken of as lost; all the apostate world that remains yet unreconciled, unconverted; "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which is lost." Matthew xviii. 11. Every unconverted sinner is in this sense a lost creature. And so indeed they may be said to be all lost; Luke xix. 10. the whole apostate world yet continuing in their apostacy; upon a double account, 1st. In wickedness; and 2nd. Under wrath.

1st. In wickedness. So all unconverted sinners are lost creatures, lost in sin; nothing is indeed more ordinary than to speak of a wicked person (even as he is such) under the notion of a lost person. Even among pagans themselves, of a very wicked man, a debauched person, they say he is *perdite nequam,* and that he is a man *perdidissimus moribus;* a flagitious person is a lost person, and the word that is commonly used in the Greek in profane authors (as you have it used again and again in Scripture too, *Asotos* and *Asolia*) signifies one that is lost, or one that is unsaved, or cannot be saved. So all the ungodly world is lost in sin and wickedness; which sin is death began, being in its prevailing power over them, they, being under the dominion of it, are dead. "To be carnally minded is death," that is, to be

under the dominion of a carnal mind is death; he is a dead man, he is a lost man that is under the dominion of a mind habitually carnal, not capable of savouring divine things, the things of the Spirit. Rom. viii. 5, 6. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. who were dead, lost in death. Death hath a present and actual dominion over all this apostate and unreconciled world; reigns over it in conjunction with sin. That is not to be understood barely of liableness to natural death, that is a low diminishing sense of that reign of death spoken of Rom. v. The restitution of that life is meant which was lost in Adam's transgression, by which not only did men become not only mortal but sinful: not only mortal as to their bodies, but sinful (and so under death) as to their souls; which was also the plain meaning of their being all dead; "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then we were all dead." 2 Cor. v. 14. An universal death stretching its wings over all this world, and covering it with a deadly shade every where; and all were alienated from the life of God, destitute and forsaken of the divine, the vital presence; God departed and withdrawn and gone, as he is from this apostate world yet unreconciled: and so are all said to be lost in wickedness, *perdite nequam*, as the common phrase is.

2dly. All were lost in wrath too, or under wrath; "The wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 17. who hold the truth in unrighteousness, as men universally do. And so, in this double respect, men being generally said to be lost; lost in sin, and lost under divine wrath; the phrase of their being lost is so applicable to them as the like phrase would be to any man in this case, supposing these two things to concur in the particular case of any man; 1st. That he is a person dreadfully diseased, that some mortal disease is upon him that is likely to be the end of him very soon; and 2nd. That he is an offending criminal besides, that he hath fallen under the sentence of the law that condemns him to die. When these things concur in any particular person's case, that is, he is a most dangerously diseased person, hath a mortal disease upon him, and that he is under a sentence and doom to die at the same time; who would not say the man were lost? It is a great question whether his disease or the halter will dispatch him soonest. But he is lost the one way or the other: so it is with the

apostate world; they are lost in sin; this is their disease which carries death in it. "To be carnally minded is death;" these men carry their own death about them wherever they go: and then they are under a doom besides; that is, all the impenitent unbelieving world lie under a doom, under a sentence. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 1. What doth this imply, but that there is condemnation to all the rest, only those are excepted from condemnation who are in Christ, walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit? all the rest then are condemned men, dead men, all lost? This is one notion wherein those not actually destroyed, or on whom the infernal pit hath not already shut its mouth, may yet be said to be lost, as being liable to be lost, and as in a visible manifest tendency to destruction, that being continually impendent and approaching. But then,

Besides this common case wherein men may be thus said to be lost, there is somewhat special in the case of some that renders their case far worse than the common case; so as that if all may (in the forementioned respects, till redeeming mercy have taken place in reference to them) be said to be lost, they much more, as having somewhat in their case much more dismal, much more frightful than is or can be in the common case of unreconciled sinners merely as such. You would think the case to be very dismal of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by vindictive flames that caught hold of them from heaven: hell rained down upon them (as it were) out of heaven, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest. Yet our Lord tells us of some whose case was much more dismal than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; some that were under his own preaching, under his own ministry, from day to day he was preaching grace and life among them in that gospel which was designed the savour of life unto souls. Many that heard it were surprised and admired, "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Luke iv. And yet even among these, there were some whose case was worse by far, and more dreadful than that of Sodom and Gomorrah; and it is easy to apprehend in general wherein. I shall not descend to particulars now, but reserve that to a further place afterwards in our discourse. It is very evident that among those that are lost in the sense and intendment that hath been mentioned; that is, as being liable to perish, and and whose destruction is approaching and impending;

among these some are yet, though lost, recoverably lost, others are irrecoverably, of the common case of the apostate world as such; though it be said of them they are all lost, yet they are recoverably lost; that is, if you consider no more than the common case as such; for there are proper apt means appointed for recovery and salvation which may probably have their effect upon them, their blessed effect, to recover and save them. And though there be degrees, very different degrees of danger, some may be more in danger, some are less so; yet the case admits of very vast difference when the gospel first comes among a people, and when it hath long continued among them.

(1.) When it first comes among them, here are the proper apt means set on foot for the saving that which was lost: the Redeemer approacheth them, makes his first trial upon them: Have you a mind to be saved, have you a mind to accept of a Saviour, of a Redeemer, to put yourselves under his shelter, and under his government, which you must do at the same time? Here are hopeful appearances in these men's cases It is true the Redeemer comes to them as a company of lost creatures; but he comes on purpose to propose to them the certain means and methods of their being saved. And you that now have a mind to fall in with the Redeemer, you may have him; you must then take him to be yours, and give up yourselves to be his: and if this agreement on your part be cordial and vital, and you are in good earnest in it, you are safe in the midst of danger; yea, though you live in surrounding deaths that do ingulf and are ready to swallow up, and are sure to swallow up all that do not so. But consider here,

(2.) That a people among whom the gospel hath long continued, and it may be with happy success as to many, many have been gathered in; but there are also such as yet stand out: they have heard the words of grace sounding in their ears often, which have sounded to them like a tale that is told. All that hath been said to them of the Son of God's having come down into this world to die a reconciling sacrifice for lost sinners, that he might bring about union and peace and friendship between the offended Majesty of heaven and them, hath made no more impression on them than so many breaths of air would do upon a rock. Sure the case is far worse with these men than the common case of sinners, as such, can be supposed to be. There may be even of these yet some whose case is not altogether desperate; we do not know what wonders the power of grace may yet

work, but there may be among these some also that are lost irrecoverably, upon whom an irrevocable doom is past; so as that repentance is hid on both sides, both from God's eye and theirs; they will never repent, and he will never repent: they have an heart that can never repent, and God hath passed his doom that he will never repent. And now as touching this case, that such a case there is, plain Scriptures put us out of all doubt; some that are never to be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come. I need not tell you for what crime. "All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, excepting that one, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come." Matt. xii. 31. But I say as to their case, who may be thus said to be irrecoveraby lost, while they yet are on this side hell, whether it may be known to others, or even to themselves that they are so lost, I shall say nothing now; I have spoken my mind to that very publicly another way in that book called "The Redeemer's Tears;" and may say somewhat more to it in the use, before I pass from this subject. But that there are some (I say) so irrecoverably lost, while they as yet are under the gospel is out of all doubt; whether they can know it, or others know it, which is less to be supposed, I shall say no more now. But concerning them, of whom this is not to be said of them, that they are irrecoverably lost, though their case be much worse than the common case: yet there may be degrees in it of greater, and less probability of their yet being wrought upon to their recovery and salvation. And that we shall come to and consider by and by, when we speak of the connection between these two, the gospel's being hid, and their being lost.

But as to the import and meaning of the phrase here, it is plain it doth chiefly refer to the latter sort of men, that is, that are lost in a worse sense than the common case doth amount to. It is not to be supposed that men's being lost in the common sense, can be the thing here intended in this scripture, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" why, all are lost! it must therefore be meant in a peculiar sense. It is evident then he doth not speak here of men's being lost in that sense wherein all are lost by nature; but he speaks of them that live under the gospel, and are not yet recovered and saved by it, whether these may be said to be recoverably, or irrecoverably lost; yea, or no; whether it be the one or the other of them, the thing

is sad; and because the determination is so very distinct, how to bring a determining line between those that are, under the gospel, lost irrecoverably, and them that are lost recoverably; and since we cannot tell among all, those who belong to the one rank, and who belong to the other rank, and it may be no one person can tell concerning himself, that he doth most certainly belong to that more horrid view of such as are lost irrecoverably; therefore we shall only take the matter indefinitely concerning those that are lost, in a worse sense than men in general can be said to be. And so we pass on in the next place,

3. To shew the connection between these two, the gospel being hid and such men being lost; for I told you, in the doctrine that the gospel being hid unto such, is a sad token of their being lost, that I may state this connection to you; you may in the general take this for a ground, that those are to be reckoned the significant tokens that do belong to the thing they betoken, either as causes or effects of it; or whatsoever things are connected with one another as cause and effect, the one of these doth significantly betoken the other. Now that connection which there is between these two, the gospel's being hid, and the soul's being lost, is a connection of cause and effect. And this connection may be mutual and interchangeable; that is, something of the gospel's being hid may be the cause of the soul's being lost; and again, the soul's being lost may be the cause of the gospel's being hid. And so they may change places; they may be alternate, as it were, in the matter; they may be mutual causes and effects to one another. We shall consider,

1. The connection between these two the former way, that is, the gospel's being hid being the cause why they are lost. And if it be hid it must needs endanger their being lost by a casual contribution that it hath thereunto, whether we can say they are recoverably lost or irrecoverably; the gospel's being hid to them is a cause of it, a manifest cause of it; if they are at last lost; into this it most manifestly results, the gospel was hid from them. If it be always hid they are surely lost; if it be so hid that at length the veil be done away, it will appear, that though they were lost they were not remedilessly lost, but upon a two-fold account the gospel's being hid must be the cause of the soul's being lost. 1st. As the gospel's being hid doth include in it the want of somewhat that's necessary to salvation; and, 2ndly, as the gospel's being

hid doth include somewhat in it that promotes their destruction. These two ways the gospel's being hid is the cause of their souls' being lost.

1. As it carries in it the want of somewhat that was necessary to salvation is the gospel hid to them, then they must want that without which they cannot be saved so long as the gospel is hid to them. The knowledge and belief of gospel truths, the acceptance of gospel offers, and subjection to gospel commands, are things without which they cannot be saved. But while the gospel is hid to them these things must be wanting: they must want the saving knowledge of gospel truths; they must want true acceptance of gospel grace and offers; they must want entire and sincere obedience to gospel commands; and without these they will be lost: these they can never attain to while the gospel remains hid; while it is an hidden gospel all things contained in it may be represented to them, but they are all so many parables, they understand nothing of the meaning of them; all that is said to them is only as a story told to a man asleep, or between sleeping and waking, and whereof there is no more perfect sense begot in their minds than there is of any thing that you mutter to the ear of a man asleep. They cannot believe what they do not understand, and they cannot accept those offers that depend upon truths which they do not believe; and they can never yield obedience to those commands which stand in conjunction with such offers, and their obedience and subjection thereunto must be in equal connection with their acceptance of those offers. I cannot take Christ to be my Saviour, but I must take him to be my Lord at the same time; and he that takes him to be his Lord, doth it without despair; but with hope that he shall be entertained by him, and treated by him as a Saviour. But nothing of this can be where the gospel is hid, and while it remains still an hidden gospel. So all this, while these souls do yet continue lost souls, even for this very cause, for this as the cause, that the gospel being an hidden gospel doth imply the want of things necessary to salvation. But also,

2. The gospel's being an hidden gospel doth imply also that which manifestly tends to promote their destruction. And under that head two things do come to be considered, indisposition on their part, and provocation on God's part; and both these growing so much the more, by how much the longer they continue void of impression under the gospel.

(1.) An indisposition on their part to all the duty they are to do, and to all the advantages they are to use and enjoy in order to their salvation; they grow more and more indisposed the longer they live under the gospel as an hidden gospel. It is necessary, in order to their salvation, that they should exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But they grow more and more indisposed to these, by how much the longer they continue under the gospel as an hidden gospel to them; and that in several respects.

1. The great things contained in the gospel that should influence them hereunto, they grow from time to time less and less considerable to them: what should have influence to the turning of a soul through Christ to bring him to exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," grows from time to time less considerable. These mighty weighty motives are contained in the gospel. Sinner, if thou dost not turn thou diest! If thou dost not fall into a closure with the Son of God as thy Redeemer, Saviour, and Lord, thou art a ruined creature to all eternity. Lo, here is a glorious heaven before thee, that will be the reward of thy gospel obedience. Here is a place and state of torment, a fiery gulf, a flaming hell before thee, and in view too, that must determine thy place, and the state of thy eternal torment and punishment if thou turn not, if thou do not obey the gospel, if thou becomest not a serious penitent and sincere believer, a faithful dutiful subject to God in Christ. Here are the great considerations which the gospel presents men with, to influence their turning, their renovation and conversion to God through Christ. Now the longer men continue under the gospel, while it yet continues an hidden gospel to them, the less do these considerations signify with them from day to day; because the force of them hath been spent upon them (as it were) heretofore, and now they signify little, still less and less. Such considerations as these, though they are the weightiest and most important that can be imagined, yet they have been blown upon; and, saith the obdurate sinner, I have learned long ago to make light of these things; and, what? do you tell me of these things now? These are the greatest things that can be told them, or mentioned to them. But these things they have learned long ago to make very little of, so as they can say, in case you talk of heaven to me now, pray what doth it signify more now than it did ten or twenty years ago? Is

heaven grown a better thing than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then. And is hell grown a more terrible thing now than it was seven or ten years ago? and I made light of it then; and, pray, why cannot I as well do so now? These considerations, which should have the mightiest power upon the spirits of men, they still signify less and less, when they continue long under the gospel, while it remains still an hidden gospel to them; for these are blown upon, and men have taught themselves to make light of them, and to have them signify little or nothing to them:—if you cannot speak to me of somewhat greater than heaven and hell, eternal blessedness and eternal misery, you move not me, for these things I have heard and made light of long ago. And,

2. The longer the gospel is hid, the minds of men grow the blinder, as if there be no ability to face the sun without prejudice; the longer you face it the more your prejudice will be. There is a way of beholding that glorious light which shines in the gospel without prejudice, and with the greatest advantage, its beams being refracted as they are allayed by grace; and so it is not an amazing astonishing glory, but a cheering, reviving heart-exhilarating glory, that shines through the glass of the gospel dispensation. But if the gospel be so hid from men that it cannot be thus looked upon, then their minds grow blinder and blinder. The sun hath put out their eyes, as the god of this world is said to do in the very next verse. It is a very dreadful thing to be struck blind with gospel light; but that is the case with many,—gospel light strikes them blind, and their minds grow less and less receptive, the longer they remain under this gospel without effect, without receiving the proper impressions of it. The proper impression of it would contemper the eye to the object, the visible power to that glory that clothes the object; but while nothing of this is done, the longer the light of the gospel shines, the less perspicuity there is in the eye of their minds; it is less perceptive, less capable of taking it in. And,

3. Conscience is grown weaker; and so they are more indisposed to all the duties, and the use of the advantages that are requisite to their salvation. Conscience, it grows weaker, and is more debilitated for the doing its proper office. The context shews us plainly how the state of this case must be understood; that is, that in the ministration of this gospel, they, whose work it is, do apply them-

selves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God; and that truth which they preach carries in it (as you have heard) a self-recommending evidence to the consciences of men. Hereupon there is a close grappling between such truth and conscience; for they do apply themselves in the sight of God, in preaching such truths to the consciences of men, that they do, and that they must do; truth then is insinuating, and gets within; as it must be supposed to do when it is held in unrighteousness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, (Rom. i. 18,) who hold the truth in unrighteousness." They that hold the truth in unrighteousness do hold it; it is got within them. Then, I say, there is a close and immediate grapple and tug between truth let in, truth intermitted, and conscience; but they have got the victory. Truth, so far as conscience receives it in, is engaged against corrupt inclinations, against vicious appetites, against a carnal heart that is averse and disaffected to God. Here lies the grapple between truth in the conscience, and the power of corrupt inclination in the heart. Well, vicious inclination hath got the victory; every such victory makes the next easier; every former victory makes way for a following one, with so much the greater facility; and conscience having been baffled once by the power of corrupt and carnal inclination can the more easily be baffled again. As you know, if there be two combatants engaged with one another in a very close tug and grapple, he that is conquered and receives the foil hath spent a great deal of his strength, and is grown weaker, and so is the more easily thrown again if there succeed another grapple. So it is in this case, when men have once brought conscience to yield, when they have succeeded so far in the design of mortifying conscience, further conquest is the more easy; for (as it hath been heretofore told you upon some occasion) when these two are engaged against one another, carnal inclination in the heart, and light in the mind, or conscience, they being opposite one to another, and mutually engaged one against another, the one must die; either conscience must be mortified, or corrupt inclination must be mortified. And whereas, the design, intendment, and tendency of gospel truth is to inforce a mortification of corrupt inclination; but the gospel is hid and doth not prevail in order thereunto, then the other part is doomed to death. There can be no consent, no yielding to it, that corrupt inclina-

tion should die: then that of course must be yielded to, let conscience die; if there must be a mortification, let it be upon conscience, and not upon appetite, not upon corrupt inclination, let that live, and let conscience die. And so much now is done towards the killing and mortifying of it; and so it grows weaker and weaker still, by how much the more the resistance to a gospel yet hid hath been continued and kept on foot. And so the indisposition grows more and more, the longer the gospel is hid; and so there is so much the more likelihood to be a being finally lost. That such will be finally lost, are in the way, and tending to it apace, in the concurrence of such things as do now meet in their case; as we would say of a vessel in a storm, and as was said of that wherein the Apostle Paul was, all hope that they should be saved was taken away; Acts xxvii. 20. No hope left of being saved. You may suppose such a concurrence in such a case, that there shall appear very little hope; here are so violent storms upon the soul that hath abandoned and surrendered itself, against conscience, to the government of lust and corrupt inclination.

And here is the Spirit of God gone; as we shall have occasion to show more hereafter. And here is the devil let loose upon a man. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded their eyes." Any one that looks upon this endangered vessel would say the ship were lost, it doth not obey the helm; for so the man doth not whose conscience hath no power over him, doth not govern him; she doth not answer the helm; she falls from the helm; she is lost, would we say of such a vessel. The storm is violent upon it; corrupt inclination grows stronger; God is gone, and the devil hath seized it, and taken possession, and is putting out the eyes of the poor creature as fast as he can. The man is visibly lost. We do not know what miracles God may work; we know not what he may do, but in all appearance the man is lost.

There are other things to be said concerning the growing indisposition upon such a soul, as to the things that are necessary to its being saved; and many things that will show the provocation grows on God's part while this indisposition is growing on man's part. And, take all together, and it seems a very hopeless case, if it be not altogether desperate. Truly there is very little hope left in such a case, that they should be saved at length to whom the gospel doth thus remain hid.

SERMON X.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

I HAVE already opened unto you what is meant by the gospel being hid, and what is meant by their being lost to whom it is so; and shewn you in what peculiar sense both those must be taken, different from what is the common case of the apostate unconverted world: that both here must be understood to superadd somewhat to that common case, wherein men as sinners in the state of apostacy, in the most general sense have the gospel hid to them, and are themselves in a lost state.

We have from hence gone on to shew you the connection between these two, the gospel's being hid and their being lost; and you have heard the one of these may be spoken of as betokening the other, and so they are manifestly put together here; and that these tokens are most significant when the token and the thing betokened have the relation of cause and effect one to another; that these two may be understood to have that mutual and reciprocal relation to one another.

That is, that the gospel being hid may be the cause that such are lost to whom it is so hid, and their being lost the effect; and back again, that their being lost may be the cause, and the gospel's being hid the effect; and, accordingly, with some difference may this context be understood, according to that two-fold sense, or reference, that one of these may have to the other. Take the former reference or habitude of these to the other, and the sense will run thus; that is, that since the great things of the gospel, about which we apply ourselves to the very consciences of men in the sight of God, are so very plain, and do carry so clear and convictive light with them, as they do, if yet the gospel shall remain hid to such as are thus dealt with from time to time, their minds will grow, in all likelihood, more and more indisposed to comport with the design of it; God will grow more and more displeased, his displeasure will rise higher and higher; their guilt will grow

* Preached April 12, 1691.

greater and greater, and they will be more visibly in danger of being finally lost; or, according to the latter reference, the sense will be thus, that the great things of the gospel are of such evidence, and of such manifest importance, that the consciences of men being applied to, and dealt with from time to time about them, it is hardly conceivable such things can be hid to such persons unless they be lost. The matter is otherwise unaccountable, why such things should not take hold of men; surely they are lost that such things will not fasten upon them. You know, according to the former reference, as being hid is the cause, being lost is the effect; this we have spoken already, and shewed you that the gospel being hid must be the cause of their being lost to whom it is so; both as its being hid doth exclude what is necessary to their salvation, and as it doth include what contributes to their destruction.

And now we go on to the other reference that the one of these hath to the other; that is, as being lost may be the cause, and the gospel's being hid may be the effect: and it is exceeding agreeable to the design of this context to understand the matter so. We do, saith he, in this ministry of our's commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. This is plain; and this is our constant course. And what? is it a supposeable thing that our gospel should be hid to them while we do so? How can it be? It can be upon no other account but that they are lost; it must needs argue and suppose them a lost sort of men, upon whom a gospel, so applying itself to conscience, doth not fasten, takes no hold.

But then (will you say,) How must being lost be understood? I have told you already how it must be understood in this place; you are sure it cannot be that they are eventually lost, or already in hell; it cannot be understood so; and it cannot be understood that they are lost in that sense that is common to the apostate world, in respect whereof the Son of Man is said to have come to seek and "save that which was lost." But there are two things besides that it may and must mean in this case.

1. That they are sinfully lost; they are lost in sin; they are lost in carnality, and that in a deeper degree than is common to the rest of the world. There is a greater and more confirmed dominion of sin in them, in their several faculties and powers, than in the generality of the unconverted world, as such; greater, deeper, blacker darkness upon their minds; the god of this world (as it follows in the next

verse) hath put out their eyes, hath blinded them, so as they have less light, less eye-sight than before they had, (so it must be understood,) or than men commonly have, otherwise there were no peculiar reason in the case why this should be said of them. But we find it said. If it were to be understood that the god of this world hath no otherwise blinded them than he hath blinded the unconverted world, why should it be said that they are lost more than all others upon that account? That would argue and be a reason that all are lost alike, if all were blind alike. But he hath "blinded the minds of them that believe not;" he hath been dealing with them all the while they have been otherwise dealt with by another hand, to be brought to faith; he hath been endeavouring to confirm them in their unbelief, and hath made their minds more blind than ever they were; and they are at a remoter distance from believing than ever, as that fascination by which he hath possessed their minds, hath more and more taken hold of them. And it must be understood that they are lost more in heart-sins; disaffection to the holy designs of the gospel, enmity against God and against Christ hath prevailed to a greater height in them, and so they are lost, lost in sin. And,

2. They must be understood hereupon to be lost under deeper guilt and an heavier doom, that is from God, penally upon them; so that he hath been even provoked to "swear against them, in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest;" as in that Heb. iii. 11, quoted from the 95th Psalm, that was sworn against them that believed not; as it was here in this context said, the minds were blinded of them that believed not.

But this (you may say) is very severe. And truly it is so. But how can we help it? We cannot by our thought, this way or that, alter the nature of things. They will lie as they do; but we may, by a due use of our thoughts, and according to that light which the Holy Scriptures afford us, come to understand things more to advantage. And some things I shall offer to you that may tend partly to justify and partly to mollify this severity. It is indeed very severe, that men under the gospel should arrive to that state, to that pitch, to be so far lost, as that to suppose them now to continue never so long under it, they shall never be the better for it. Let the plainest things that can be thought or spoken be said to them, they shall be always hid to them, because they are lost. A fearful

thing! But do but consider a little what I shall offer to you, which may have that double tendency, that I spoke of, partly to justify this severity, and partly to mollify it. As,

1. Consider this, that those that are thus lost, hereupon is likely to be still a hidden gospel to them, let them hear it never so long, they are like to be never the better for it. I say, Consider, that if any are thus lost, they were not always so lost. This is a thing that is come upon them, and which they have drawn upon themselves. It must be understood with reference to a former day which they have had, wherein the matter was otherwise, wherein they lay not under that dreadful stupefaction, and that heavy doom which now will come upon them. They had their day; those had so in that 95th Psalm, who are given us for a sort of paradigm, they against whom God "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." He bare their manners in the wilderness forty years, as the expression is, in the 7th of Acts, of dying Stephen. There is time supposed to have been afforded to such under the gospel, to whom the matter is come to this. They had their day; those that live within the compass of that light which revelation adds to the common light of natural reason; they have their more special day, and have always had so. There is a time, concerning which it is said to sinners, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." He limits a certain day, a certain now; and this is a more critical now. There is a more peculiar crisis of time with such as live under the gospel than is with other men that have not that peculiar light which is afforded to the church of God in the world. God did, in a sort, connive at the nations of the earth that went every one in their own way, as it is said in the 17th of Acts, did overlook them, did not look upon them with so curious, so narrow, so inquisitive an eye; (as it were, speaking of God after the manner of men;) "but now (saith the Apostle) he commandeth all men every where to repent." As that Roman Consul, who, treating with Antiochus, (who made war upon some allies of the Roman state,) demanded of him in the name of the senate and commonwealth of Rome to withdraw his forces from molesting such a place. Saith the king, What time do you allow me to think of this, or consider it? He immediately draws, with a rod he had in his hand, a circle about the king, and tells him,—Now, before you stir out of this circle, declare whether you will be a friend to the senate and people of Rome, or an enemy:—so doth God circum-

scribe men, and set them limits. Now, out of hand, it may be in reference to some of us here in this assembly; the determination may be now, before you stir out of this place, Declare whether you will be reconciled, or persist in your enmity and unreconciled state. How many passages of Scripture do speak to this sense! "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah lv. 5, 6. Now or never; now you have time for it; it may be, shortly you will have none, nor any ever after. It is a great thing which you find in that somewhat parallel text, (Luke xix. 42.) our Saviour beholds Jerusalem with weeping eyes, in his approach to it, being then upon the opposite hill, the Mount of Olives, between which and that whereon Jerusalem stood there was a valley, in which ran the Brook Kidron; when he was on the opposite hill, and on his descent of that, he having a convenient view of Jerusalem, as it lay before him, he weeps over it in such words as these, (mingled with tears,) "Oh! that thou hadst known, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Tears intermingle with, and at length interrupt the words, and cause that apotheosis, so as that the sentence was not filled up. "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace." It is filled up with a more speaking silence, by a silence more emphatical than words could be,—"If thou hadst known;" we are only left to conceive what had been if they had known the things that belong to their peace in that their day; "but now they are hid from thine eyes!" Oh, how terribly emphatical is that now!—Now they are hid, a little while ago they were not hid; now they are. The curtain is drawn that creates (for aught we know) an eternal night; that curtain being drawn between the wretched soul and that glorious light that did shine upon it: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. There is such a now, and there is another now; wherein this now is over, as in that 2 Cor. vi. 2. referred to that of the Prophet Isaiah, xlix. 8; supposing then, any to be thus lost, they were not always so lost; the case was in this respect sometimes otherwise with them. And then,

2. Supposing them thus lost, and the gospel thereupon thus hid, permanently hid, this must refer to the former

provocation; with many of them God was not well pleased; they who had that day in the wilderness, whose carcases fell in the wilderness. If our congregations be full of carcases, if there be so many walking carcases that fill our streets from day to day, God is not well pleased; if the gospel be a lifeless gospel, God is not well pleased, he is provoked. But, further,

3. The causes of that provocation are high and great, so that we have no reason to think it strange if the effects that ensue have very dreadful severity in them. Let me but instance to you, in some concurrences that do make the cause of such displeasure and provocation. As,

(1.) That when men let themselves thus be lost under the gospel by their neglect of it, and their non-attendance to it; they are the greatest things imaginable which they did neglect, to which they refused their attendance, which they would not regard. When the gospel did in the first age of it begin to shed its light upon the world, (though in that more wonderful manner the things were not more wonderful than now,) you hear in that (Acts ii. 11.) that when that gift of tongues was so amazingly, by miracle, first conferred, all the people in that vast confluence at Jerusalem, at that time, from so many several countries, each one heard in his own tongue.—What did he hear?—"The wonderful things of God." The gospel is not another gospel from what it was then; it acquaints us with most wonderful things still. This was the aggravation upon Israel of old, upon Ephraim; "I have written unto them the great things of my law, and they have accounted them a strange thing," counted them strange to them. Hos. viii. 12. That might have been more commodiously expressed according to the significancy of the word there used, "were counted to the man alien thing," a foreign thing; a thing that concerned them not, which they had nothing to do with, which they looked upon as we used to look upon strangers, men that we never saw or knew before; we look upon them wistly; so they looked upon the wonderful things of the law of God, and so those do here upon the wonderful things of the gospel: whereas they are great and wonderful, they should command a man's ears, and engage the attention of his mind to consider and take notice of them; they look upon them as strange things, as alien and foreign to them, and which they had nothing to do with. This is very provoking, when such things are brought to our notice, as "angels stoop down to look

into." The descent of the glorious Son of God into the world, how did it amaze the glorious angels above! What is the meaning of this? say they. They look down after him.—What is the intention of this strange descent?—What is it for that the heir of heaven should go down into that lost, forlorn, wretched world? He that was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, is going down to visit that dark region of death. What means he there? What would he do there? Did they think he went down to die? Did they think he went down to be a man? Did they think he went down to offer himself a sacrifice upon a tree for the redemption and salvation of such? When so wonderful things as these are made known; and about these things (saith the Apostle) we apply ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God; we appeal to their consciences about the rights of the Redeemer, and what duty, and what homage, must be owed to him from the redeemed. And, if our gospel be hid you are lost; if you will not regard such a gospel, though having in it so great things, you must be lost. And then,

(2.) These great things are set in the gospel dispensation before men, in the clearest light. They are not represented darkly and unintelligibly, and in parables; but the most important things, and those about which they are most of all dealt with, are the plainest things, that every one that runs may read. What? is there so much of mystery in "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," and in loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and souls, and might, and our neighbour as ourselves? Is there so much of mystery in these, that men will not regard the greatest things, and clothed with the clearest light? What else doth that mean—We recommend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God? They are such things, as every conscience of man may be expected to admit conviction about out of hand, without more ado; then, sure, if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. It comes from hence that they are a lost sort of men, otherwise such things could not be hid from them. And,

(3.) They are things that men are dealt with about in the highest name; for, when we come to you, to deal with you about these things, we do not come upon our own errand; we do not come to you in our own name; but the ministers of this gospel are ministers of Christ, and they come

to you in the name of Christ; and he hath expressly said; "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth him that sent me." This same gospel dispensation is the ministry of the Son of God, as the case is plainly stated before us in that 1st of Hebrews, beginning, "God, that spake many other ways in former times, hath now spoken to us by his Son;" and continues speaking to us by his Son; and (as he represents the case in the next chapter) "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God bearing them witness?" And afterwards, in the 12th chapter and 25th verse, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." This is said, when we are told that our Lord was at the right hand of God on the throne of the Majesty on high; as in the 3d verse of that chapter, having given an account of our being under this ministry of the Son of God; though we are told, that, "he, having purged our sins by himself, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" yet still we are under his dispensation, and still he is the great Speaker to us; so that now, when any suffer themselves to be thus lost under the gospel, in their own sinful and chosen deceiving blindness and enmity against it, no wonder if it be determined that it shall be an hidden gospel to them, and they lie long enough under the dispensation of it, and be never the better; for they have been affronting the Majesty of the Son of God under the dispensation all this time. He that did seek and command greater attention, and greater reverence, and greater subjection of spirit, and upon higher right and title than when there was that terrible appearance upon Mount Sinai, that shook the earth, and that seemed as if it would have put the creation into a paroxysm; there hath been a greater obligation to the deepest reverence and veneration upon them. And how just is the provocation when this gospel is neglected, and men lose themselves under it, for him to say and determine this,—Well now, as to you it shall always be an hidden gospel! And again,

(4.) There is this farther in the case, that these great things in that great name, in that most excellent name, have been hinted, not once but often; and often inculcated, and urged over and over again in the authority of the same

name. What a mighty weight doth this add to the same load of guilt! and how much matter doth it supply to feed the indignation, to heighten the provocation, that such were applied to from time to time, in a continued course, for many years together. "The earth, that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: if there be fruit, a blessing comes upon it, and follows it; if there be no fruit, nothing but briers and thorns, then it is followed with a curse, and a dreadful curse,—"It is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned." Heb. vi. 7, 8. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. xxix. 1. A fearful thing, when the gospel itself shall not be my remedy!—shall be destroyed without remedy; no remedy shall remedy your case. And,

(5.) We must suppose the Spirit to have often been at work in this time, and while such things were from time to time inculcated; so it was with the people of Israel; "you do always resist the Holy Ghost." Acts vii. He was then always striving, more or less, otherwise there could not always be a resistance. That is doing "despite to the Spirit of grace." Heb. x. 29. And herein is the greatest provocation, as I have told you heretofore, there is a remarkable accent in that expression, "the Spirit of grace." Oh, that Spirit of all kindness, and grace, and sweetness, and benignity! to despite him, what an high provocation is this? When he comes and toucheth any of your minds, and makes some impression on your hearts, saith he, secretly and inwardly: "Sinner, wilt thou yet return? Hast thou yet no desire after God?—no inclination to know a Redeemer, and choose and close with him? Now to spite a Spirit of grace, when he speaks to you so kindly, and so sweetly, and so tenderly,—Oh, sinner, do not go on, and perish for ever!—here is the very height of provocation. The word, in the original, signifies to injure inwardly the Spirit of grace, to make the injury enter into him, as it were; it imports to sting a man to the heart, to the very soul; as if it had been said, your injury pierceth into that Spirit of grace, that Spirit of love, kindness, and goodness; it enters into it. Thus it must be, when in such days, and at such times as these, the great things of the gospel are heard with no effect. And,

(6.) It must be supposed, conscience was in some measure convinced at this time; for applications were made to

it in the plainest cases. We have applied ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, saith the Apostle. And now if our gospel be hid, it is that you are lost. And,

(7.) It must be supposed too, that affections have been stirred in some measure and variously; there have been some desires enkindled, and some fears awakened, and some hopes and joys possibly raised, and some tastes and relishes of the sweetness that is in this Gospel, and of the things contained therein; as it is supposed in that Heb. iv. 4, 5. after all this, to lose yourselves in darkness and wickedness; now if the gospel be hid, there is no recovering such by repentance, as he thereafterwards speaks. But,

(8.) This adds weight to all the rest, that they were very light matters for which men have exposed themselves to this fearful loss, even of themselves, of their very souls: a loss that nothing can recompense, nothing can make up. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. What hast thou had in exchange for thy soul? The smallest matters imaginable, the temporary satisfaction of a lust. I sold my soul (may one say) to please my friend. I sold my soul (may another say) for the love I had, for the lust I had, to a cup of drink. I sold my soul (may a third say) for the pleasure I took in a vain idle companion. These are the things that kept me from closing with God, uniting with my Redeemer, and from engaging and persisting in the way of life. O that God, and Christ, and heaven, should be set so low! Thou didst break with me, (must the great God say, and must the Redeemer that died for you say,) thou didst break with me for a trifle, for a thing of nought; yea, thou didst prefer before me the vilest things, the most odious things. Thou didst rather choose to be a vassal, a slave to lust, than to live under the easy yoke and government of a compassionate and merciful Redeemer and Saviour. The deformities of wickedness were more amiable in thine eyes than the beauties of holiness. What can be said in this case, when the story comes to be told, and the matter is to be represented just as it is, that it is thus as you have heard?

And that is the third thing to be considered in this case:—That as former provocation must have been supposed, so that provocation must have been very high and very great upon these sundry mentioned accounts. But then I add upon all this,

4. That if any hereupon be thus lost (as you have heard) it is only that God hath retired from them, withdrawn

from them. He hath not positively hurt them; he never put any ill thoughts into them, or any ill disposition of mind. If it be severe in itself, and dreadful to you, that you are now a lost creature, God hath no hand in it, otherwise than as he retired from you :—" Thy destruction is of thyself, but in him is thy help found." Hos. xiii. 9. He was ready to help thee, and to save thee, thou only destroyed thyself; he only withdrew that presence for which thou didst not care, that Spirit which thou didst vex and grieve; that is all: he never put any ill thought or inclination into thy mind and heart, thou destroyedst thyself; he did but say, These wretched creatures do not care for me, do not care for my Son, do not care for my Spirit; well, I will retire, I will let them alone, I will let them have their own way. He had said to you, " Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you; I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded." Prov. i. Well, I behold your destruction now. It is not said, I will destroy you, but " I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh;" and it will certainly come. God tempteth no man, neither is he tempted by any; but every man is " tempted when he is led away of his own lust and enticed." James i. 14. And then I would add lastly,

5. That although all this be very certain, yet we cannot suppose the Apostle here to be absolutely decisive in his judgment concerning the final states of particular persons: such may be more lost, and in a worse and more dreadful sense lost than many others in the world, than the generality of the pagan world. But though they are so, it is not for all that determined that they are so lost as that they cannot be recovered. And we are sure they are not so lost as that they cannot be recovered, if they have not sinned that sin which cannot be pardoned; and which I do in the general believe that no man hath ever committed, or is guilty of, that is afraid he hath; indeed, your case is more dangerous than before, which should awaken you so much the more, because it is dangerous, and you are upon hazardous terms. They may be said to be lost, as being more out of the reach of the ordinary methods of grace, who yet are not absolutely lost, not sure to be finally lost. And no man hath reason to apprehend he is so lost, finally lost, irrecoverably lost, that comes once to be solicitous about it. No, if our God hath brought you to consider and bethink yourself; I am in danger to be lost, I know not what will

become of me, or of my case at length, if I that have been such a stranger to God should continue much longer a stranger to him; if I that have neglected to capitulate with the Son of God should much longer neglect it; I know not what will become of this, it may be bitterness in the end. If you begin thus to consider, I hope the issue will prove thus, that it will be said of you as it was of the Prodigal Son, "This my son was dead and is alive, he was lost but is found." But more to this purpose, (as I have partly intimated already,) I shall speak in the use.

SERMON XI.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

They are lost souls to whom the gospel is an hidden gospel. This (you know) we have been upon from these words; and we have in this shewed you what is meant by the gospel's being hid, and what is meant by the soul's being lost; and that both these are to be understood in a sense peculiar and different from the common case of men; and in what reference the gospel's being hid, and their being lost, doth differ from the common case, we have particularly shewn you: and have further shewn the connection between these things, the gospel's being hid, and soul's being lost, to whom it is so; the one doth betoken the other, and they are the most significant tokens which have connection with the thing betokened; as causes and effects, the one to the other. I have shewn this is the case here: that the gospel's being hid, it is a cause of the soul's being lost, both as it excludes what is necessary to their salvation, and as it includes what promotes their destruction. I have again shewed you too, that being lost may also be the cause of the gospel's being hid; and shewn how being lost is to be taken in that case: lost in wickedness, as men more extremely wicked are said to be, and lost under a divine doom. So they must be understood to be to whom the gospel is therefore hid, men given up and

* Preached April 19, 1691.

forsaken of God, and then the God of this world blinds them.

And because this appears very severe, therefore I did by sundry considerations endeavour partly to justify, and partly to mollify, this severity; now I come to the use of this important truth. And it will be useful,

Use 1. To inform us of sundry truths that by way of inference may be deduced here. As,

1. That it is no sufficient ground upon which any may conclude their state to be safe and good, that they live under the gospel: I pray consider it. It is not enough hereupon to ground a conclusion concerning your good and safe final state, that you live under the gospel. No, though you had apostolical preachers among you, for such these Corinthians had to whom this is with so much terror spoken. No, though you had angelical preachers, such as could speak to you, not with the tongues of men only, but of angels; for the Jews had that word before that was given to them as a gospel; (as the Apostle takes notice, Heb. iii.) unto them was the gospel preached, as well as to us. And their gospel was called the law, as that whole revelation went under the name of the law: "They that have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law." In those days when the law was the more conspicuous part of it, they had it "by the ministration of angels, but they kept it not." Acts vii. 53. Nay, though it were by the most divine preacher, our blessed Lord himself; "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord himself?" Heb. ii. 2. even that gospel was preached by the Son of God himself, and as it was, so was an hidden gospel to many, and they lost souls under it. A man may perish as well under an hidden gospel, as under no gospel. And again,

2. We are to infer, That the proper design of the gospel is the salvation of souls. If the gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost; if it were not hid they would not be lost, that is plainly implied: but that which hath no design or tendency to save would not save, whether hidden or not hidden. But there is no interveniency in this case to hinder a person's being saved by the gospel, but only its being hid: therefore that which would save souls if not hid, must have an aptitude and designation to this purpose. Here is nothing to hinder a soul being saved by the gospel if it be not hid: by this you learn therefore that the true and apt tendency and design of the gospel is, to save

souls. How often is it called by names that signify so much? "To you is the word of this salvation sent." Acts xiii. 22. "After you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Eph. i. 13. "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which first began to be spoken?" Heb. ii. 3. What doth the words of this gospel speak?—It speaks salvation. It is a great matter to know the gospel by its true name, and to understand it accordingly: to think what God hath sent among you, when he hath sent his gospel among you; and that which is its end and design, ought to be yours in attending it. The gospel would make great and glorious work (I doubt not) among us, if it were more generally come to this, that the true end of the gospel were our end, were convinced when we come to attend; how would it confound many a one if they were to give an account of their end in coming to attend, and wait on the ministry of the gospel? I am going to such a place, such an assembly, such a church, such a meeting-house. Well saith one, and what are you going for? I am going to hear what such a man can say; I am going to please my fancy and curiosity, to gratify my novel humour. God knows how few come to such assemblies with that temper of mind so as that they can truly say, being asked, He that knows all things, knows I go to look after the salvation of my own soul; it is a gospel of salvation that I go to attend upon, and I go to attend upon it as such, on purpose that I may be saved, that I may in this way be working out my own salvation. But what an affront is it to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth to pervert the design of this gospel. What? Have men nothing to play with but sacred things: things that carry the stamp of the authority and majesty, as well as the grace and goodness of Heaven upon them? Is there nothing else to be trifled with but things of that sacred and awful import? No wonder if the gospel be hid, and no wonder if souls be lost by multitudes at this rate. But again,

3. We may further learn, That while a man lives under the gospel, the great question that depends concerning him is, Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? Here is the great question that depends concerning every one, and which they ought to recount with themselves over and over again. Here is this case depending concerning me; shall I be finally saved or lost? Oh! what an awful thought is this that every day that goes over my head, and every time I

go to hear a sermon, still this question lies under consideration; shall I in the issue, or end of my course, be a saved or a lost man? Sure at this rate we should be working out our salvation with fear and trembling; nothing becomes us more, nothing is more suitable to the state of our case. And,

4. We further learn hence, That men may be lost on this side hell. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that *are* lost; hid before they reach hell, whither no gospel comes; and so lost before they reach thither. And then again,

5. By parity of reason, Men may be saved on this side heaven, as well as they may be lost on this side hell. We know the great Emmanuel was otherwise called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. If this blessed word hath taken effect upon thy soul, it is saved; that is, it is so far saved now from sin, as that it governs now no longer. Its empire is broken, its throne is thrown down in the soul. Here is salvation on this side heaven: salvation is this day come to this house, to this soul, he is already a saved one. There is inchoate salvation; salvation begun that ascertains consummate salvation, and from which that will not be separated. The New Jerusalem, that glorious city that comes down out of heaven from God; Rev. xxi 4. (supposing that be meant of a state of the church of God on earth;) the nations of them that are saved, walk in it. As soon as they enter into it, there they walk as saved ones. The nations of the saved, there they dwell, there they inhabit the city of God.

6. They to whom the gospel is not hid are not lost, or are of these saved ones; if they to whom the gospel is hid be lost, they to whom it is not hid are saved. They are in this state of salvation already. Oh! happy creatures and blessed state that you are come into. The gospel is no longer a hidden gospel to you, though it is to many a one beside. With what admiration may you say, "I thank thee, (Oh Father,) Lord of heaven and earth, that when such things have been hid from many a wise and prudent one, thou hast revealed them unto me!" Matt. xi. 24, 25. hast caused thine own bright light to penetrate, to strike through into my very soul, to shine into my heart, as it follows in this context: "And thereupon, though I was a wanderer, a stray and lost creature, thou hast sought thy servant, I went astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant,

for I do not forget thy commandments." Psalm cxix. last verse. Thou hast sought thy servant, and found him out. And thou mayest say of thy soul, as the father of his prodigal son; "This my soul was lost and is found." Luke xv. last verse. "We all went astray as lost sheep, and he bare the iniquities of us all," Isaiah liii. 6. that we might be recovered and saved at last. Oh you that find gospel light to enter into your souls, bless God, and admire! The gospel is not hid from me, I am therefore saved out of my lost state.

But besides these inferences of truth, there is a further and another sort of use that I must proceed to.

Use 2. It may be (upon what hath been before said in opening the doctrine of this text to you) some awakenings may be upon the spirits of some, perhaps some may have been in a going among us, and may say in their hearts, And what is likely upon all this to become of me? What is my final state like to prove? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I would fain give some help in this case, and would in order to it, lead such into some distinction of thoughts, that they may not be confounded in their inquiry. Now this inquiry in general may be capable of being formed into three questions. Either 1st. The meaning of their inquiry may be, Shall I be certainly saved at last; or 2ndly. The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I do, certainly to know if I am certainly to be lost? or 3dly. The meaning of their inquiry may be, How shall I evidence it to myself, or have it evidenced to me, that there is any thing of hope in my case? That, going on in the use of prescribed and appointed means, things may be brought at length to an happy issue? That I may have such a present view of my case, as to judge and think of it, that it may be possible that I may be saved at last?

1. Now as to the first of these questions, supposing it to be the question of any whom God hath begun lately to work on; of any that he hath begun lately to awaken:— Then I must needs say to that question; Friend, you are too hasty, you make too much haste to think, that when God hath but newly begun with you, you should presently be at a certainty that you shall be saved. This may be more haste than good speed. When you have gone on a considerable tract of time in a serious endeavour of working out your salvation with fear and trembling; and giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure, it will

be time enough to put this question then; it is yet unseasonable for you. And then.

2. Supposing that the next be the question with any, How shall I know that I shall be certainly lost? As the the former question is an unseasonable one, this is a vain one, altogether vain. If you shall certainly be lost, what can it avail you to know that you shall? or do you think it is possible you should ever come to know it on this side being in hell? It must be by some revelation from God, mediate or immediate; but God doth not use to do vain things, to reveal any thing to no purpose: and this can be to no imaginable purpose. If you shall certainly be lost it can do you no good to foreknow it; and therefore the revelation of it is not to be expected from God any ways, mediately or immediately, and consequently it is a foolish vain question. But,

3. If the question be, How may it appear that there is any thing of hope in my case, that in the use of the prescribed and appointed means, I may, through the grace of God, possibly be saved at last? This is a sober question, and becoming a serious and considerate man, and one that hath a value for his soul, and a reverence for God, the great Disposer of our everlasting soul's concernments. And therefore in reference to this I would be assisting the best I can, and as God shall enable me. And there are many things that are to be said to it. As,

1. That you always ought to hope till there be most apparent reason for total despair. If there be not a reason for total despair, then you are under obligation to admit of some hope; nothing is plainer, that a reasonable creature, capable of futurity and of another state, he hath it as a law in his nature to use prospect, and to exercise hope, in reference to futurity. And I cannot but recollect a noted passage of that Platonic Jew, Philo Judæus, "That hope towards God, in reference to men's future concernments, is of the very essence of man; and he is not to be called a man, a human creature, that hath not hope in reference to his future concernments." And there is a great deal in it: it is to be looked upon as somewhat else than a lavish expression, for God hath (no doubt) contempered the frame of all his creatures to their state: and having made man capable of futurity and eternity in another state; hope cannot but be an essentiating principle in his very nature. And therefore it is very unnatural and a doing violence to ourselves, to endeavour to take away all

hope in reference to that futurity which is yet before you, and which you have yet in prospect. You ought to hope while there is no apparent cause of total despair; for whatsoever doth not admit totallity, there must be somewhat of the contrary, by reason whereof it doth not so. There can be no imaginable ground upon which a man should not admit of a total despair, but as there is some hope. If there were no hope, despair would be total; if there be found hope, despair cannot be total. And it is matter of duty to you, always to entertain and cherish some hope when there is no apparent reason for total despair. That I fore-lay in the first place.

2. There can be no reason for total despair while the gospel stands unrepealed; while it is neither generally repealed, nor repealed particularly as to you. All that while the connection remains between faith in Christ and salvation: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. While this gospel that makes this connection between believing in the Son of God and not perishing, not being lost, but being saved, stands unrepealed, we have no reason for total despair. Still if I believe, I shall be saved; if I believe in the Son of God, I shall live. I have been a vile creature, it is true; a great rebel, not only against the authority, but against the grace of God; and I have deserved to perish a thousand times over, and to be given up as lost without remedy. But the gospel is not yet repealed that saith, Whosoever believes in the Son of God shall not perish, shall not be lost, but have everlasting life; it is not repealed in general, nor shall be to the end of the world. And what? Will any man say it is repealed as to him? It is repealed as to me? Pray shew that repeal! you cannot say that it is repealed as to you, unless you had a Bible reached down from heaven that saith, whosoever believeth shall be saved, whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life, except John such an one, or Thomas such an one, or Elizabeth such an one. Shew me such a Bible that saith the gospel is repealed as to you; though I believe never so much I shall not be saved, I am an excepted person. Where is the exception? Shew me the Bible wherein is that exception.

Aye, but you may say, it is very true, I doubt not, that if yet I believe I may be saved; but alas! what reason have I to hope that I shall ever be brought to believe, ever be

enabled to believe, who have resisted the grace of God, and the Spirit of God so long, so often, so injuriously, so insolently, as I have done? What hope is that I shall ever be brought to believe? I add therefore,

3. That there is not only hope, nay, I may say, ground of confidence, that if you believe you shall be saved, but there is also ground of very great hope, if you do indeed set your minds to inquire and consider about this matter, that you shall be brought to believe. For that is the head which I lay down here as the third in order: that all the while the command, the law, stands in force as to you, that obligeth you to believe, all that while there is a ground and reason left you to hope, that you shall be enabled to believe, when the evangelical law doth particularly oblige you amongst the rest that live under the gospel, to believe in the Son of God, that you may not perish but have everlasting life, as much as if there were a law made in your case alone. If there were a particular law made concerning you, and laying the charge upon you—Do thou believe on the Son of God, that thou mayest not perish, but have everlasting life; I say you are as much obliged to believe on the Son of God, as if there were a particular law made concerning you, and none but you, concerning you alone. This is the command of God, this is the law, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent." John iii. 33. It cannot be said that because there is such a law that obligeth you to believe in Jesus Christ, therefore you certainly shall believe; but it is to be collected with the greatest clearness imaginable, that there being such a law obliging you to believe, you have reason to hope you shall be enabled to believe if you do seriously design the thing. Is it to be thought that God should come (as it were) directly to you, that the Son of God should apply himself directly to you, sinner: I charge thee, accept my Son, believe in my Son, take him to be thy Redeemer, thy Saviour, thy Lord; and that there should be no hope that ever you should do so, or that he will give you any help in order thereunto? This is the most unimaginable thing in all the world.

Question. But you may perhaps say, How shall I do to understand this, that I am under obligation to believe on the Son of God, that I may not perish, that I may not be lost?

Answer. To that I say, (that I may leave this a clear and undisputed thing in your thoughts,) either you must be so obliged to believe in the Son of God, to receive and take

him for your's, your Lord and Saviour, or else, your not doing so is no sin. Now, where is that person that dares to produce himself, and say, I live under the gospel, that gospel is come to me, whereof this is the great fundamental law, the command of the great Author of it, even of the God of heaven; this is his commandment, that we believe on his Son: but it is a commandment that doth not oblige me? Where is the man that dares say, If I live an infidel under the gospel all the rest of my time, I am no sinner in it? If believing be not your duty, not believing is not your sin, but what? Is there any body that can say, or dare say, that to refuse Christ is not his sin? Then to accept him is duty. Therefore doth this gospel, still as you live under it, urge it on you as a duty out of hand to come to an agreement with the Son of God; resign thyself up to him, put thyself into his hands, and at his feet; into his hands to be saved, and at his feet to be subject, and to obey him. This the gospel chargeth on you; and while it doth so, while it calls you to repentance, and calls you to faith, you have reason to hope still; I have God's warrant, why should I not expect his help? If he calls me, why shall I not think he will help me, help me to repent, and help me to believe in his Son, that I may not be finally and for ever lost! And again,

4. You can do nothing in your circumstances more pleasing and grateful to God than to hope in his mercy; thus to state your case, I am naturally a lost creature, a perishing creature, I have deserved to perish over and over; that a Spirit of divine light and grace should never visit my soul more, or look after me more, I have highly deserved it; but yet I have heard of the nature of God, that he is immensely good and gracious; his name hath told me his nature, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin." Exod. xxxiv. 5. I will throw myself upon that name, I will cast myself on his mercy; I have nothing to do but that; and that, why should I stick to do? Now, I say, you please him, you please him beyond all things that in your circumstances you are any way capable of doing. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him and that hope in his mercy,—pleasure in them! Strange that any act of an abject, guilty, impure, perishing wretch should be pleasing and grateful to the pure, holy, glorious, ever-blessed, God; that he should be pleased with any act of mine. Why, it

is not as it is your's, but it is with reference to the object, as it is a thing suitable unto him, a tribute due to his great and glorious name. It is the best acknowledgment you can make of his deity, of his godhead, of his most excellent perfect nature, comprehensive of all perfection, but wherein we are taught to conceive this as the most eminent, when we are told that God is love. Here is a poor creature, as insolent as he hath been, (saith God,) as proud, as full of enmity and malignity against me, now I see he he comes to acknowledge me to be God, that is, acknowledgeth me to be merciful, infinitely, immensely merciful, beyond limits merciful, beyond expression merciful. He takes pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. Now (saith he) they give me my due, now they acknowledge me to be God, that they will yet hope in my mercy. Remember all this while that it is hope that I am encouraging you to without security; you have reason to hope, but you have no reason to be secure, no more than he hath who in a battle encompassed with thousands about him alive yet, yet alive, but still deaths are flying about him as thick as hail. You have reason to hope, but no reason to be secure; but if you hope, you do the most grateful thing to God, you pay him the most pleasant grateful tribute that such an abject creature as any of us is capable of rendering to him: you give him the proper glory of the deity, boundlessly good and gracious, rich in mercy. This is to own him to be God, to own him to be infinite, to own that his ways do as far exceed your ways, and his thoughts your thoughts, as east and west, and heaven and earth, are asunder. Isa. lv. 8, 9. Again,

5. Know that it is not for you to prescribe limits to the exercise of this mercy, it is not for you to set bounds to it. If God limit himself and any way signify that he hath done so, so be it; but that he hath no way signified. But it is great insolency for any of us to talk of limiting him; to say, so far the patience of God shall extend, and no further; beyond such a sermon he will never give me one minute's addition to the day of grace. It is not for you to limit him; if he limit himself, you have nothing to say to that, but that he hath never told you he hath done, or will do in reference to your case. But I would have you to be possessed with the apprehension how uncreaturely a thing it is for any of us to take upon us to limit God, and set a day to the exercise of his patience, his sparing mercy, his bounty, and his saving mercy. If you do rightly take up

this matter, you will understand, that there is in despair the highest presumption. There is not in any thing higher presumption than there is in absolute despair. If you allow yourselves absolutely to despair, and say, God will never look after my soul; then nothing remains to me but to abandon it to perish. I say, you cannot be guilty of an higher presumption than doth lie in this despair; for it is for you to take upon you to limit God, to measure God; you take upon you hereby to determine what infiniteness can do, and what it cannot do. This is very bold presumption. This is most uncreaturely arrogance; for you to take upon you to set God his limits and bounds. No; say I will always wait, and always hope, let him defer as long as he pleaseth; but let me lie a prostrate creature at his foot, still in fears, and tears, and tremblings; though it be till I perish, I will perish in this posture, rather than ever to say he cannot help me, he will not save me; it will not consist with the limits of his patience and bounty towards a poor wretch to save me. Take heed of saying so. There is high presumption in this despair.

There are many other things behind.

SERMON XII.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid.

WE have the use in hand of this terrible word; sundry inferences of truth we recommended to you from it; and proceeded to other uses, wherein the design was to speak suitably to the case of awakened souls among us, that have made known their case, and their solicitous sad thoughts. We have had regard to this great inquiry, What shall we do that we may understand our own case, and how matters are like finally to issue with us?—Shall we be saved, or shall we be lost? And several things were spoken to that which we stated as a sober question; which answers were general, and more fundamental to what was to ensue.

* Preached April 26, 1691.

And those things being forelaid, we shall now go on to give some characters that may be distinguishing somewhat of the state of persons under the gospel; so as that, if they be found, will give ground of hope; if they be not found, it will administer much ground of fear.

But here you must take the matter thus: that, for such characters as those which I shall mention, the discerning of them actually upon yourselves is never intended so to encourage your hope as if no apprehension of danger should still remain; you are not to hope without apprehension of danger; and if such characters are not found, you are not to fear without apprehension of remedy; because (as hath been told you) the design is not to tell you who shall certainly be saved, or who certainly lost; but only to shew what cause there is, or may be, of more or less hope or fear, in reference to the final issue of things with you. And so,

1. It gives much ground of hope when any do find in themselves a formed desire of understanding distinctly the terms of life and death; when any would fain know upon what terms they may expect to be saved or perish in the final issue of things; when they do not desire to be unacquainted with the true tenor of the gospel as touching these matters; but accurately to know what is required, that they may live, and escape the wrath that is to come. That hiddenness of the gospel that is in connection with the being lost, is with those with whom it hath this fatal event, a chosen thing, a voluntary thing; it is hid by an affected blindness of heart. Men are blind, as being unwilling to see. (Ephes. iv. 18.) "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." If thou hadst known; it is plain, that that not knowing was faulty, inasmuch as their being afterwards hid was penal; and it could not be faulty but as being voluntary,—that they did not desire to know the things of their peace; whoever of you can avow it before the great Searcher of hearts, and speak it to him as the sense of your souls, "Lord, thou that knoweth all things, knowest that I do desire to understand what the tenor and import of that rule is by which souls are to live or die for ever; I desire to understand it as it is,—not to have it disguised to me,—not to have it misrepresented, according as the foregoing expressions are; wherein the apostle protests against the disguising of the word, and clothing of things with specious false colours; but approving and commending them-

selves in the manifestation of the very truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2. They (I say) that can avow this have ground of hope; and they that would not have it so, they are persons to whom the gospel is hid, and are lost, as the series of discourse shews. You have much cause to hope God will drive things to a good issue with you at length, if you do seriously desire to understand his mind in the gospel, what it doth determine concerning the way of saving sinners; which, if they take, they are saved; if they do not, they are lost. When this is your sense, "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me; Shew me thy way, I would fain walk in thy truth!" But for such as desire only to have smooth things said unto them; and if the true doctrine of the gospel will be terrible; if it will look with an unfavourable aspect upon my vicious inclinations,—Let me never hear it. If any say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" (Job xxi. 14.) "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us." Isaiah xxx. 11. They say to the prophets, Prophesy not; we do not desire to have that bright light stand so directly in view before our eyes; Oh, might it cease! Oh, might it disappear! This is a dreadful token; a very dreadful token; and if any, more than others, are in danger of being lost under the gospel, these are the men. They that receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, (their spirits could by no means comport with the truth,) are given up that they might perish,—that they "might be damned." 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. And,

2. It is very hopeful where there is a great sense of remaining ignorance; when any do think very meanly of the knowledge that they have of those great and important things of God, that do concern souls so very nearly. Agur is brought in saying, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" (Prov. xxx. 2.) when there is a very humble, self-abasing opinion taken up and maintained of our own meanness, blindness, and darkness, the great imperfection and defectiveness of our knowledge in the most needful things. This looks very hopefully; and on the other hand it is a very dreadful token, when any think themselves so wise that they need be taught no more. There is more hope of a fool than of such an one, that is wise in his own conceit; he seems marked out for destruction, that thinks he is so well acquainted with all the great secrets and mysteries of godliness that he

needs no further instruction; and thereupon despises and hates it. "He that hateth instruction shall die." They are plain, peremptory words; and nothing is in the nature of the thing of a more destructive tendency. As the moralist said, *Multi pervenissent ad sapientiam, &c.* many might have attained to wisdom if they had not thought they had attained to it already. So many might have attained to the saving knowledge of God in Christ, if they had not thought they had already attained. Again,

3. It is a very hopeful token, when there is any perception of knowledge growing in these great things; when we can apprehend that light doth come in by the appointed means; that God hath shined into our hearts, as it follows in this context: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them:" but "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts." 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. That is a sign then the gospel is not quite hid, if some beams of light be darted in, be injected. If you find there is an increase, it is to be increased with the increase of God," as the apostle's expression is, (Coloss. ii. 19;) for this is divine knowledge that we are speaking of, the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And it is to them that do observe themselves a perceptible thing, and a thing to be perceived with pleasure, when there is an increase. How grateful is the appulse, the first arrival of any new beam of light, any new thought; when the mind comes to be more and more opened, and things let in upon it, which it is of concernment to it to understand and know. And do but consider, such of you as are more solicitous about the state of your case and what is like to be the final issue of things with you: You have lived a considerable time under the gospel; and, What, have you gained no acquaintance with the great contents thereof? There are many things discovered concerning the state of man by nature, Do you understand nothing of them? Do you not know that he is a degenerate creature, that he hath a blind mind, a corrupt, depraved heart? That he is wrapped up in guilt, and exposed thereupon to divine displeasure? It reveals much of a Redeemer; Do you understand nothing of that?—who this Redeemer is, the eternal Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, the heir of all things; that he came

into this world, took human flesh, and died a sacrifice for sin? Do not you understand this? and that hereupon God is well pleased with him for his righteousness sake, that divine justice acquiesceth, expects no higher, no other sacrifice?—that, whereas there must be a great change wrought in the temper of men's spirits to make them capable of the duty of time, and the felicity of eternity; an Almighty Spirit is obtained by the blood of that sacrifice, that it should go forth to do this great work upon the souls of men; so that you are not to be left hopeless, struggling in your own impotence to attempt and undertake (as it were) a new creation in your own souls; but that Spirit will be given to them that ask it, and you may draw in its influences as so much vital breath. These things the gospel acquaints you with; and do you understand nothing of them? Hath no light come in by all this discovery all this while? Indeed it is a fearful token, where there is no knowledge by long-sitting under the gospel; when any man's case doth admit it to be said of them, they are "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth;" a sort of persons marked out for separation from God and all good men; from such turn aside; such as have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; (2 Tim. iii. 7.) and are "ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth;" it is a people of no understanding, "therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour;" (Isaiah xxvii. 11.) for, (as hath been said,) ignorance under the gospel, of that it hath made necessary to be understood, and done in order to salvation; it is most voluntary, and therefore comes to be punished by the gospel's being hid, and their being lost, if they finally prove to be so. And again,

4. It yet will look well and hopefully, if you find that you have a real value for the gospel; if you esteem highly of it; if you consider it as the "word of life," as the gospel of your salvation; and if such notions as are given you of it, and under which you are taught to conceive of it, have recommended it to you, and you look upon it as a sacred and venerable thing; if you do not come to hear a sermon as if you were to hear a story told you; to hear the word of God as a tale that is told; but the word of it recommends itself to you as a majestic thing, as carrying a divine stamp and impress upon it; if you be in any measure awed by it, so as to tremble at the divine word,—this is a most comfortable character where it can be found. It is

towards such that God is looking with favour, when any come and sit trembling under his word. He will not look with slight and despising eyes upon such; he looks upon them with indulgence and a favourable regard. (Isaiah lxvi. 2.) and you may look upon it, that he is in the way with you, while you find that disposition in your own spirits towards his word. That he may reckon, I will speak to such, and not be disregarded in what I say. If there be not so pleasant a relish of divine truths; if yet there be an awe of them: though they do not appear amiable to you, if yet they appear awful and majestic; and you consider, when you attend upon gospel dispensations, you have to do with divine things; and you consider the word that you do hear, not as the words of men, but as they are, indeed, the words of God; there is hope in this case: this hath a good aspect, looks promisingly towards a good issue. But when the gospel itself is looked upon as a contemptible thing, as much regard would be shewed to a fable; this is of most dreadful import; when the very means of our salvation is come into contempt with us, as they that in a dangerous sickness are brought to despise the only proper remedies that can be thought of, as capable for recovering them, and saving their lives, this is a dangerous token. Again,

5. It looks hopefully, if you find that the intention of your mind is much engaged in hearing the word; it is a natural consequent of your having awful thoughts of it, of your esteeming highly of it as a divine revelation; that which should be immediately consequent hereupon must be a very earnest intention of spirit in hearing of it, to attend it as that wherein my very life is concerned; the word saith, "Hear, and your souls shall live." (Isaiah lv. 3.) Thereupon you must say, I will hear, that my soul may live. If this be your design in hearing, it is very hopeful indeed, that you are not likely to be lost under the gospel. If this be the temper of your minds, I come to hear that my soul may live; and so you watch every word; you observe and bend the strength of your minds, as much as in you is, to attend and listen to what you hear; as the eyes of the assembly are said to be fastened on our Lord when he took the book of God, and expounded and opened it to them. Luke iv. 20. But if there be no attention in hearing; if persons come to such assemblies as these to see, or help to make a shew only, to see a reed shaken with the wind. If this be your errand, you come to please your fancy, or you come because you do not else know what to do with

so much time; you do not know how to employ an otherwise waste hour, and therefore go to this or that church or meeting, (as it happens,) throw yourself in here or there; this is of very threatening import. If this temper of mind should continue with you, it looks as fatally as any can be thought; that a man will be lost under that gospel at last which he never regards, to which he gives no attention. It may be, you are not at leisure, your thoughts are otherwise taken up; as it was with Ezekiel's hearers, "They sit before thee as my people," (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) and with their mouths they shew much love, (with their countenances they do, they carry the appearance and shew of those that come out of love to my worship, and to exercise devotedness to me;) but their hearts go after their covetousness; their heart was wandering all the while. I do not speak, in this case, of the incursion, the surprising incursion of vain and unsuitable thoughts, the wanderings which we sincerely bind and set ourselves against, and cannot totally hinder; but I speak of letting our spirits at liberty to wander, keeping them under no restraint, letting our thoughts rove for such an hour or two together, when we are to be attending to things that concern the life and death of our souls. This is a very dismal token, wheresoever it is to be found. If it be thus usually with any, none more likely to be lost under the gospel than such. And again,

6. It looks hopefully, if, so far as you have understood, and, by earnest attention from time to time, come to know the true meaning and import of the gospel, and what the terms of life and death for souls really are; you do thereupon desire to have your hearts wrought up to those terms; and there is no wish entertained with you, that you give harbour to, that the tenor of the whole gospel were otherwise than it is; you do not desire that the terms of life and death should be brought down to a compliance with your inclinations; but you desire your hearts may be wrought up to them; and say, Do not make me a gospel like myself, but make me like the gospel. Is that your sense? It looks very encouragingly; I would take this gospel just as it is; I find it requires the receiving Christ Jesus as a Saviour and as a Lord; I am willing it should be thus; I do not desire there should be any change to gratify any ill inclination of mine in this tenor of the gospel. I find it forbids all manner of sin; and reigning sin, under the severest penalty; that wherever it reigns it dooms too. I

submit to this state of the case; I desire to have every thing of sin down, not to be in dominion. It may be, there are some fainter desires of this kind having place where a real thorough work is not yet wrought. But it is well there is so far a tendency towards it; that you are right in your aims and designs, and that you have the true mark before your eye; that is, to have the great and proper impression of the gospel inwrought into your souls, and they made agreeable to it; and that you do not wish to have a gospel formed on purpose to be more agreeable to you. When once a soul is transformed into the likeness and image of the gospel; this is it that doth most certainly characterize it for heaven and eternal glory. You have "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," (or into which you have been delivered, as that may be read. Rom. vi. 17.) this is to have that "fruit unto holiness" habitually first, the end whereof will be "eternal life," as it follows in the same chapter; and while you are aiming at this, and tending to this, the matter carries a very hopeful aspect with it. As on the other hand, it is very dreadful, when that, whatsoever wit and skill any have more than others is all employed this way, to wrest and torture, and mis-shape the rule by which their present practice is to be measured, and by which God's final judgment is to be measured concerning them. When the gospel is not to transform you, but you to transform the gospel; you would not be shapen according to it, but you will fain shape it according to yourselves, according to your own hearts; nothing doth look more like one to be lost and perish under the gospel than this. And,

7. Whereas, that gospel by which you are to be saved, (if ever you be saved,) is a gospel of reconciliation; it is a very hopeful character if you do really desire and value friendship with God; if his love and favour be of real value with you; when you can speak this as the sense of your souls, "In his favour is life;" (Psalm xxx. 5.) which you must understand did not only hold forth the truth of the thing, but the sense of a good man, a well-minded man concerning that truth. It is very true, indeed, that, if you consider the thing itself, objectively taken, in the favour of God stands the life of every one; but this doth not only speak the truth of the thing, but it speaks the sense of a good and honest heart; that he accounts that in the favour of God stands his very life. And, do you really account so?—so as whatever you have to enjoy in the world

besides that, cannot satisfy you, if your hearts yet hang in doubt within you concerning your state God-ward. It is not corn, and wine, and oil, that you wish for, and can satisfy yourselves with; but, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance, and that will put more joy into our hearts than when corn, and wine, and oil increase!" Oh, there can be no worse character, than when it is a matter of indifference with any, whether God have a favour for them, or no favour! His friendship and his enmity is all one to them. Under a gospel of reconciliation, how likely are such to be lost, when the very end of this gospel of reconciliation between God and them is a disregarded, despised thing; when men can go all the day long through the hurry of their affairs and businesses, and their thoughts are filled and taken up with vanity and with impertinences, in comparison, but no room is left for one such thought throughout a whole day, How stand things between me and heaven? Am I under the divine favour, or disfavour? How fearful was the case of those Israelites, when they had, at the same time, meat in their mouths and wrath upon their heads? God "gave them quails for their use, and they did eat, and the wrath of God came upon them while they were eating;" (Psalm lxxviii. 30, 31.) "On the wicked he rains snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest;" (Psalm xi. 6.) "He is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm vii. 11.) They that concern not themselves about any such matters, it is all one to them, Give me what will please my appetite, sense, or flesh, and let God be pleased or displeased. I am willing to run the hazard of that. This looks very fatally, when it is so.

And then again, as consequent to this,

8. Truly, fear itself doth give much ground of hope. It is a very hopeful character upon you, when you are really afraid lest a controversy should still depend, and not be taken up between God and you: "Blessed is he that (thus) feareth always." Prov. xxviii. 14. And so it is, on the other hand, a very black character, where there is no such thing. He that hardeneth his heart against such fear shall fall into mischief. And again,

9. Where there is much consideration about the affairs of your souls, and your hearts are much taken up in musing and meditating on these matters, it is an hopeful sign. An unconsidering soul is a perishing soul,—hath the character upon it of a lost soul. But if your mind be full of thoughts from time to time; or, if there be many times when you

can set yourselves on purpose to consider the state of your souls, and your case God-ward, this looks very hopefully; that is, that God is at work with you, that he is dealing with your spirits; for you are not to assume it to yourselves that there are any such good thoughts, any which have that tendency, which have that look. "We are not sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves;" (2 Cor. iii. 5.) that is, which is good. Indeed, one ground why many are so apt excessively to torture and disquiet their spirits with the apprehension of an irrecoverable lost state, is from too much arrogance; that is, they are apt to arrogate to themselves such things, which, upon reflection, they cannot deny are in them; for you must know there is common grace that leads to special. If it hath not reached up to special, it hath a tendency and leadingness thitherward. If God be dealing with spirits by his common grace, it looks hopefully if it be comported with; and when thoughts do throng in from time to time with you, that you cannot do as the most do, that is, throw away all concern about your souls, as it may be the generality, so far as you have opportunity to observe, trouble not themselves (as you can discern) with any thoughts at all, what shall become of them hereafter. But there have been such thoughts which have been struck in as so many darts and arrows into your hearts. You are not to think that you have been the authors of them to yourselves, but that God is at work with you, is dealing with you, is in the way with you; and this (I say) looks hopefully, if it be duly comported with. And yet, again,

10. It is a very hopeful, encouraging character, if you should find upon consideration that you have arrived no farther, and that you have not gotten to a firmer, more settled state in holiness and walking with God, yet you do also find a great disposition in yourself to self-accusing; that you are apt to criminate yourself, to find fault with yourself, and to lay load on yourself with blame; to wrap up yourself (as it were) with shame; that your proficiency hath been so slow and little all this while. This looks very hopefully; when this is the sense of your souls, looking in, and looking up at the same time, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The publican's character was a good character, and an hopeful one, compared with the opposite one of the Pharisee. Luke xviii. 13. The Pharisee and the Publican both go up together to the temple to pray; the Pharisee hath nothing to take notice of in

himself but his good deeds, (and very pitiful ones they were;) "I fast twice in the week; I give alms of all I possess;" I pay "tithes, mint, anise, and cummin;" (we are told elsewhere they punctually paid these tithes;) "I am not as other men, nor as this Publican." The Publican hath nothing to say; but, standing at awful distance, cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the Publican (it is said) "went home to his house justified rather than the other." Such as are full of self-accusing thought, they live with perhaps too tormenting fears concerning their state Godward, yet there is that of intermingled good with it that leads towards a good issue at length, and which carries a plain indication, that they are not to look upon their state as a lost state. And, especially,

11. If there be any relentings towards God, any tender relenting and self-bemoaning. There may be self-accusing without these kindly genuine touches of remorse that there should be; and there may be of them too, and in too low a degree, and in too transient a manner. But while there is any thing of them, there is real ground of hope that God is dealing with you, and is likely to carry on the work further, according as you duly comport with him in what he hath began, and is yet doing. "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Jer. xxxi. 18. Refer that to what goes before, and you will see there is "hope in their end." "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself;"—things are like to have a good issue yet, though he hath been wayward, cross, perverse, and rebellious; yet, let me listen to him; Do not I hear him bemoaning himself?—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, and secretly saying, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." There is hope in the end, as to this case. It looks as if it would have a good end at last. A heart hard as a rock under the gospel, is a dreadful thing; the impenitent heart, the heart that cannot repent. And I add, lastly,

12. If there be yet a resolution to persist, to go on in the way that leads towards life, this looks well; you have not yet attained; you are not yet at a certainty; but yet you are resolved to go on, to hold on your course according to that warning given by good Samuel to the people of Israel, that were now set a trembling, and in a most dreadful consternation, what would become of them; they dreamed of nothing, when God thundered upon them, and when the lightning from heaven testified divine displea-

sure; they, I say, thought of nothing but destruction. Well, (saith Samuel,) do not you, for your part, "turn aside from following the Lord;" he will not cast you off if you persevere in your way, and turn not aside from following him. He will not cast off his people, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people; he will cast off none that do not first cast off him. And many such, too, he may recall and recover; but while there is a resolution with you, come of it what will, I will never forsake the holy way; I will spend my days in prayers and tears: I will never give over waiting and seeking, whatever comes of it. Oh! what an emphatical benediction is that we find pronounced in this case! "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Prov. viii. 34, 35. There is a blessing upon all waiting ones. Pray, take that blessing home, whosoever of you are yet trembling ones, suspenseful ones,—you that have hearts full of doubt, you know not what will become of things with you; if there be that resolution to wait and persist in a known prescribed way of duty, he that so doth, hath a blessing pronounced from the God of his salvation; there is a blessing over his head from the God of his salvation, to shew you how little liable he is to the heavy doom of being irrecoverably lost. That God, who glories in the title of the God of our salvation, he is breathing down a blessing upon you all, while that you are resolved upon a course of waiting; I will wait till I die; "I will call upon him as long as I live;" I will never give over following him, let him do what he will with me. This is the course that is never likely to have an ill end.

SERMON XIII.*

2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 3.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

WE are, upon the use of this, and the last we insisted upon was of inquiry; or, we intended therein to assist their inquiry who may be solicitous touching the state of their own case, whether they are not lost irrecoverably while they live under a gospel that aims at the saving of souls, but which they apprehend doth them no good, and they fear never will. I have in reference to such, the last time, given sundry characters that will bespeak their state upon whom they are found, not to be hopeless; that it is such, as concerning which they ought by no means to conclude that they are lost, that they are out of the reach of mercy.

And, as to what thereupon remains, I have only this further to do, that is, to lay down two conclusions, in which I shall sum up much of the meaning of what hath been said; that is,

1. That there can be no hope that their state shall be good and safe at last, who continually live in the neglect of those methods which the gospel they live under prescribes in order to their salvation. And,

2. That there can be no ground for them to fear they shall be finally lost, who, with dependence on the grace of the Spirit of Christ, are resolved, to their uttermost, to use the methods which the gospel doth prescribe in order to salvation. The one sort have, in their present state, no reasonable ground to hope; the other, in their present posture, have no reasonable ground of despairing fear. These two conclusions sum up what I would leave with you upon this subject. And thereupon I shall say somewhat: 1. By way of warning; and (if that will not do) by way of lamentation to the former sort. And, 2dly, somewhat by way of exhortation and encouragement to the latter.

1. As to the former, I must repeat it to them, that they have no ground for a present hope that they shall be saved,

* Preached, May 10, 1691.

in the continued neglect of those means and methods which the gospel hath prescribed for salvation. And I would recommend to such, for their warning, those plain and awful words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Phil. ii. 12, 13. There is an injunction with the reason of it, and both the injunction and the reason have their distinct parts. As to the injunction, there is the substance of it, with its modification. And the enforcing reason thereof hath in it considerable too of the substance thereof, and its modification, each of the latter corresponding with each of the former: Work you, why? for God works; do you work with fear and trembling, for God works at will and pleasure. You have reason to work, because God works. You have reason to work "with fear and trembling," because he works under no obligation, but at absolute liberty, so that he may desist when he will. If you resist, if you withstand, if you work not in subserviency, in subordination to his gracious work, he may retire and leave you to perish when he will; he works at will and pleasure, therefore do you work with "fear and trembling." And since we find the Scripture doth speak after this tenor, here and in many other places, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate,"—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,"—"They that run in a race, run all, but one obtains the prize; so run that you may obtain:" as if he should say, Do you so run as if you were the only person in all the world that should be saved, and you might be that one; that is, as if you did know, that but one person in all the world should be saved, and you might be that one. "But one obtains the prize;" run as though there were but one that should be saved, and that you may be that one. Since, (I say,) this is the tenor of Scripture in reference to the great affairs of our salvation, or that we may not be finally lost under this gospel; there can be no present hope, no ground for a present rational hope for them that do counterwork these stated methods that God hath prescribed for the saving of souls. I will not say, that God will never reclaim you; we know not what boundless immense goodness, and the riches of mercy, that are with him, may do;—but, I say, you have not a ground for a present rational hope; the way you are in takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. You are in the way to perish. Such as have determined within themselves they will continue in a

sinful endeavour of pleasing their flesh, and in a sinful neglect of saving their souls, and will admit no thought that tends to their disquiet, and to cross them in their sinful course; but they live under the gospel. They (I say) that do so conjoin with the profession of the gospel the contempt of it, are never to expect that they are to be saved by the gospel they despise; or that the grace of it shall save them, while the authority of it doth not rule them. They have no reason to expect that. Therefore, if this should be the continued resolution of any, (I hope better things as to you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak;) but if this should be the continuing resolution and posture of any soul, nothing remains but to lament their case.

I would take up a lamentation for such, and invite all that are serious to join with me in lamenting the wretched forlorn state of such as are perishing upon these terms. Sundry things concur to give us here the representation and prospect of a most dismal and deplorable condition; a stake that doth even claim and challenge from us to be lamented; that we lament, while all endeavours of remedying it seem still frustrate and in vain. Why,

(1.) Such are perishing under the gospel; that is, they are benighted at noon; they have created to themselves an horrid darkness in the midst of a bright and clear day;—they are lost in a day of salvation. This is the day of salvation; it is so (it is to be hoped) to many others; and, oh, what a fearful thing it is to be lost, and perish amidst a company that are taking hold of salvation, or of whom salvation is taking hold? And,

(2.) They are the more fearfully lost, not only under the means of salvation, but by them; gospel light strikes them blind: "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light;" the sweet vital savours of the gospel strike them dead; become to them the "savour of death unto death." They are so much the more miserably lost, by how the more there is of apt and suitable endeavours used in vain for the saving of them. The blessed God opens to them the design he hath in hand of saving sinners; he hath sent his Son with direct application to them, "to seek and to save them that are lost;" his Spirit strives with them, and against all its motions, all its convictions, they are breaking their own way to eternal ruin. How dismal is the case, to think that they are so often invited, yet are lost; warned, and yet

lost! lost! Exhorted, and yet lost! Besought, and yet lost! Wept over, and yet lost! They descend, and go down and perish under the intreaties, and against the prayers and cries of friends and relations, and of such to whom their souls are dear even as their own souls. And again,

(3.) It is to be considered that it is their souls that are lost. This is the subject of the loss. Ah, poor wretch! if thou hadst only lost an estate; if thou hadst only lost an eye; if thou hadst only lost a limb, a hand, a foot, a leg, an arm, here had been either some remedy, or some relief for this loss; but to lose a soul, an immortal spirit; to have that precipitated and plunged into an eternal ruin,—what reparation, what remedy for this loss? And,

(4.) Such are lost when they never thought of it, or, it may be, when they had the positive thought all the while of being saved; when they speak peace, peace, to themselves, sudden destruction, a surprising destruction, comes upon them. Wast thou not wont to say, I shall be safe in my neglect of God? I shall live a prayerless life, and be safe? I shall live a vicious life, and be safe? I may please my flesh, and gratify my sense all my days, and be safe? Are they not wont to think so? They perish when they think not of it; they are ingulphed and swallowed up in an unfeared ruin; sunk the worse, and so much the more dreadfully by much the less it was dreaded, the more fearfully the less it was feared. And,

(5.) It is very deplorable, in their case, to think of the companions that they have been formerly associated with, and that they are associated with now. Such as have been companions with them in exercises of religion, such as have been companions with them in acts of wickedness, and such as are now companions with them in torments, fearful aggravations of their being thus lost, arise from such. Those that they have been wont to hear sermons with, and that they have been associated with in the drunken debauches that have drowned all the remembrance of them. Those that they have been with (it may be) under convictions, under some good impressions; and with them in those acts of wickedness that have stupified their souls, and bereft them of sense, and abolished and obliterated all the impressions that were made on them before. What heightenings will here be of the woe!—what inforcement of the torment of that state, when the wretched partakers therein together shall fall to mutual upbraidings, criminations, and recriminations of one ano-

ther!—when one shall say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thy face; and the other shall retort, and say, Oh, cursed be the day that ever I saw thine!—that we who did sometimes pray together, and sat under the word of God together, could encourage and heighten one another to that pitch of wickedness, to be sensual together, debauched together, vain together, drunken together, wicked together, in affront to all that light that shone in our faces, and that shone in our very consciences? And,

(6.) What a mighty addition will it make to be perpetually reflecting, in that state wherein thou canst not chuse, canst not cease to be an everlasting companion to thyself?—when one is to be but his own companion, as he hath made himself very ill company to himself, he cannot but be much worse in the infernal state, when there shall be an everlasting self-consciousness of former wickedness and present resentments that cannot be avoided, and against which it is impossible his soul should now be able to fortify itself. Oh, the pitiable state of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind! Consider that. Think of it over again. The pitiable state (I say) of going down to perdition with an enlightened mind! To descend with rational principles in a man's soul, which by how much the less heretofore they did serve for government, do so much the more effectually now serve for torment;—that light that did not govern, did then condemn, and doth now torment. The clearer the light the more fervent the fire, when that light turns all into flames, and tormenting flames; so much the more light, so much the more the fervour of that flame. To reflect in that cursed society, that every man shall be to himself his own cursed companion in the place of torment, upon the rational principles that he had admitted, understood, and assented to before; and to think then how very reasonable, (oh, how very reasonable!) were such sentiments as these, often inculcated on me in my former state, that a creature can never have been made to be his own end; that it could never be supposed that a reasonable, intelligent, immortal spirit was principally designed to serve a piece of clay; that a religion, that could never suffice to govern a man, would never suffice to save him; that that which doth not sufficiently distinguish one from a wicked world, shall never distinguish him from a perishing world. How often have such things as these been inculcated! and who sees not the reason of them now? But when they shall be

revived in the future state, in that state wherein the wretched creature finds himself finally and irrecoverably lost, how will the light of all these rational principles glare in his face! Then what a stupid foolish creature was I that could not consider these plain things before, when I saw how plain they were! When one shall reflect and bethink himself, How often was I told that that religion, which should end in felicity, must begin in transformation! If it shall make my soul happy hereafter it must change me now, it must have changed it in the former state; it must have implanted the love of God in it,—it must have inwrought into it the præmordial principles of the divine likeness, otherwise the temper of my own soul must banish me from the divine presence, and associate me with devils and damned spirits, throughout a long eternity. How often did I hear these things! How plain were they, and unanswerable! How impossible to oppose any thing to the light and evidence of them! These are things wherein the gospel doth recommend itself to the very consciences of men that sit under it, as the foregoing words speak, "we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." They have done so, who have spoken to you at this rate, and about such things as these. If such a gospel be hid; if the things contained in it, that carry so convictive cogent light and evidence in them; if these things (I say) be hid, what can the issue be but to be lost? And how terrible will that be! How dreadful must the case be, when any find themselves finally lost, and to have nothing to do in a vast immense eternity, but to revolve these plain convictive thoughts in their own wretched minds! And again, it may be added,

(7.) What an additional weight of misery will there be from reflecting upon those that were companions with many such in their former state, and did take the right and safe way, and persisted and persevered in it to the end! What tormenting resentments will arise from the thoughts of such! To think of such and such an one, we have gone to the assemblies together, we have sat together under the same sermons. It may be such an one was convinced, and so was I; perhaps we compared thoughts with one another; the convictions with such and such issued in a thorough work. Such and such an one being convinced did shut up himself in secret; he wrought out the matter in prayer with the blessed God. The thing issued at length in a solemn covenant between him and the Redeemer; he

gave up his soul, infolded in the bonds of an everlasting covenant, into his hands who is the great and only Saviour of souls. And why did not I do so too? We have had the same warning; "My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Prov. i. 10. Oh, why did he take warning, and why did not I? Why did he pray, and why did not I? Why did he covenant with God, and why did not I? Why did he say, God should be his God, and I would never be brought to say it? And why was he true and stedfast to that covenant, but I was false and unsteady? And,

(8.) How will it wound to think how near the matter was to a determination the other way, at some particular juncture of time; sometimes, when I was deliberating, the balances seemed to hang even, and I was just upon resolving the safe and happy way! O wretched creature that I was! what came into my mind that I should recede and revolt, and fly back when I was urged to it, to come just now to a closure with God in Christ: Accept and resign; take him, and give up myself? What madness possessed me, that, when I was just going to do it, I did it not? What plucked me back? Oh, to think how very light matters turned the scale! the other season of sensual delights; this and that vainly to be tried once again; less than a feather cast the balance against my God and my soul, and my eternal well-being; what will these things do in an eternity, when a man hath no other employment for his thoughts? And, lastly, to think,

(9.) That I took him for my adviser whom I might easily have known to be the destroyer of souls, and against whom I know to be the Saviour of them. The counsels that come from our blessed Lord and Redeemer, and the temptations of the wicked one, they carry their own differences so manifestly along with them, that nothing could have been easier than to have discerned and perceived the difference; whose was the voice in the one, and whose in the other; whose language was now spoke, and whose language then. How easy is it to discern the difference when there are suggestions thrown into the mind, "Soul, take thine ease," pursue thy pleasures, admit of no disturbing disquieting thoughts; what were thy faculties made for but to be gratified and indulged? And when it is on the other hand said, Thou dost not know how long thou shalt live; thou hast no command of another breath; thou art to make no boast of to-morrow, for thou dost not know whe-

ther ever thou shalt see a to-morrow. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh;" turn to him while he invites thee to turn, and while thou mayest turn and be accepted. How easily are these voices distinguishable! But for a man to have given himself up to be led captive by Satan at his will, so as he hath no other will but the devil's will; it is the devil's will I should neglect God, I should forfeit my soul, and throw off all thoughts and cares about my eternal concernments; and he hath signified his will in such and such temptations. Oh, that a man should be so infatuated as to comply with the known will of the devil, who is a murderer from the beginning; a liar, and a destroyer of souls; and that against him who is love, and kindness, and goodness itself, and the Redeemer and Saviour of souls! If there be reason to apprehend there are any sitting under the gospel; under its daily teachings, solicitations, warnings, and counsels; that will yet perish in their own way, till they finally perish, if they will perish unreclaimed, let them not perish unlamented; let us throw tears over ruining and perishing souls; follow them with lamentations to the brink of the pit, though we cannot save them from precipitating themselves into it.

2. But I must change my voice, somewhat turn my style, and apply myself a little to that other sort, such as are full of solicitude lest they should at length perish and be lost under this gospel, as having it still an hidden gospel to them that hath never done them good, and that they are afraid they never shall be the better for. I must repeat to such, that, in the way of your duty, and while with dependance on the grace and Spirit of Christ you are resolved to comply with the prescribed methods of the gospel, you have no cause to fear you shall be lost; you have as little cause for that fear as the others have for their mad presumptuous hopes. I must leave some things with such, the more fully to convince them of this. As,

(1.) You are in the present way of salvation; the way you are in hath a good tendency; it looks well: it looks towards a good end; it hath a pleasing aspect with it: never fear you shall miscarry while you are in this way; it is the way of life, and the way that tends to life; that is, there is life in the beginning of it, and the further any one makes progress in it, the more and more he penetrates into the regions of life. There is a continual tendency to life in that way; that is, as any do persist and go on further, they

do come into fuller and fuller vitality, till they arrive to the present fulness thereof, for eternal life; and the inchoate life of this present state, are both of a-piece. There are some previous essays tending to life that you are under the present seizure of, even now, while you are looking heaven-ward, looking God-ward; it is somewhat of life, or of preparatory workings that have that tendency, and that cognation have taken hold of you, because that it is plain such thoughts are internal, and so are the springs of an internal motion; and there is no internal motion, or from within, which is not to be looked upon as a kind of vital motion; though it is true, indeed, there are fainter beginnings that are extinguishable, yet there is a great matter to have some beginnings; for if they are yet such as are extinguishable, they are yet also such as are improveable, and may rise and come higher, till they come beyond the sphere and verge of common grace, into the verge of special grace, which two spheres do very closely border and touch upon one another; and he that is upon the extremity, the extreme verge (as I may speak) of common grace, is often upon the very verge and brink of special grace. And,

(2.) As you are in the way of God, a way that hath a good look and tendency, God is in the way with you, it cannot but be; but that he is with you, and will be with you, while you are with him; you find him with you; you are to impute it to his being with you, to his presence with you, that there are inclinations and dispositions that tend heavenward, that tend towards that good and blessed state. You are to take heed of arrogating any thing in this kind to yourselves. Suppose it be yet but common grace,—common grace is grace; and if it be grace, it is not nature; it is not to be attributed to you,—you are not to arrogate and claim it to yourselves; This is of me. The thinking of a good thought, we have not a sufficiency for, as of ourselves; we are not to claim that: and there is many a good thought that may be short of saving grace; but we should take heed of assuming it to ourselves; and therefore, if there be inclinations and dispositions towards that way, and towards that state which you are to design for, and professedly bending your thoughts towards, yet say, you have a divine presence with you; for these things are to be ascribed to him. All such previous workings and dispositions, you must say, they do all lay claim to a divine author; such a wretch as I must lay claim to nothing that hath any the least appearance of good in it. And,

(3.) You are to consider for excitation and encouragement jointly, that this is the proper state of conflict wherein now you are; your present state is a conflicting state. You are with great and earnest contention of spirit to make your way to heaven and eternal life; it is the business of the state wherein you are; a state of probation, and a state of preparation for a final eternal state. Resolve upon doing suitable to your state. And consider,

(4.) That it will not last long. The time of trial will soon be over; rest, and enjoyment, and rejoicing, and triumph, will ensue. Conflict and fidelity therein to the death. Entertain yourselves with such pleasant words as those which have come from that mouth into which, and by which all grace is poured, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 13. "To him that overcometh shall be given to sit on my throne, as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his throne." Rev. iii. 21. "He that overcometh shall be a pillar in the house of my God, and shall go no more out." Rev. iii. 12. "To him that overcometh shall be given the new name in the white stone, which none knoweth but he that hath it." Rev. iii. 17. "He that overcometh shall be fed with the heavenly manna. And he that overcometh shall inherit all things." Rev. ii. 17. Strive and labour now as one that designs and expects to overcome; and never fear you can be lost in so doing. It is unreasonable to fear a being lost in that only method which is prescribed for salvation. For, what? Do we think the blessed God hath prescribed inaptly, unsuitably, vainly, and with no accommodation or subserviency to the design for which he hath professedly prescribed it? And again,

(5.) As that which should excite you greatly, consider that the contest is for your souls; it is for eternal life; there is no giving out so long as you can say I am on this side eternity, my life is yet whole in me; I have this spirit, this soul, that was infused by the Almighty, yet in me; I am never to throw away this soul so long as I have it; so long as I find this spirit is in me, that inspiration of the Almighty that first gave me understanding. I am never to abandon this soul; and it is abandoned if you should throw away all hope; you can do nothing for your souls if there be no hope; despair binds up all rational endeavours. There is not one step more ever made, in order to salvation, after it becomes totally despaired of; that is an actual participation of hell. You put yourself into the infernal state

too soon, and without warrant, while you have no pretence, no ground for it. Why should a man devilize himself, when God hath not done it? He doth distinguish your state from that of devils, why should you make it the same with them? There is no such thing as praying in hell; no such thing as supplication for mercy, or expectation of it; no possible expectation. Why should a man turn his present state into a final state, and that which is so accursedly final. Your present state is in order to another that admits of no change, and which can refer to none beyond it. And consider, too,

(6.) That your business lies with God, who is pleased to make himself known by most sweet and pleasant titles,—"The God of all grace,"—"God who is rich in mercy;"—and by such a name as, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, though he will by no means clear the guilty;" that is, those that will have none of his mercy; they that by impenitency and infidelity bind down their own guilt upon their own souls, he will never clear them; but he is most ready (even from what he saith to be his nature) to receive returning souls, complying souls, those that are willing to take his way, and fall in with his methods; otherwise he must forego his own name, and no longer be called gracious, merciful, abundant in goodness. Will you not believe him when he protests and swears by his own life? "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he return and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, oh, house of Israel?" Do you think that God trifles with men, when he bespeaks them at this rate? Do not these words carry a signification with them, the most pleasant, the most emphatical that can be thought, to any soul that is inclined to turn to him? They import nothing of encouragement to those that will not turn, or to them that securely and resolvedly go on in the way of their own hearts, otherwise than as they do still invite their return: but supposing no returning disposition, there are other words that speak the mind of God towards that other sort of men. "He will wound the hairy scalp of them that go on still in their trespasses." Psalm lxviii. 21. "He is angry with the wicked every day." Psalm vii. 11. "He rains snares upon them, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This is the portion of their cup." Psalm xi. 6. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." So he re-

presents himself towards them who are resolved to continue the contest with him, and will rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler." Job xv. 21. But if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace. Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Fury is not in him, but though he can easily, as a devouring fire, burn up briars and thorns, yet if any will take hold of his strength, and make peace with him, they shall make peace. This is God-like, this is suitable to his present nature, every way suitable to the perfection of the Deity. Consider with what a God you have to do: you have no cause to fear having to do with such a God, as will not let you be lost and perish finally: you have no cause to fear that he will, when you find in your heart a disposition to comply with him, and a desire to do so; fain I would do so, fain I would be what he would have me be, and do what he would have me do. It is a blasphemy against the divine goodness, against the very nature of God, to suppose that he will throw away a soul that so inclines towards him. And,

7. It is against the express word of Christ to suppose that he will let such a soul be lost. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. And what? Will you not believe him? What cause did he ever give you to disbelieve him? To whom did he ever shew himself guileful, or apt to deceive? He that came into this world, full of grace and truth, how horrid is it to take up a suspicious thought of him! And lastly consider,

8. That it is not only contrary to his word, but it is contrary to his nature and design to let such a soul miscarry, be lost and perish in his sight, and under his eye, that desires to comply with the methods that he hath prescribed in his gospel. It is against his nature, his nature is expressed by the divine name which is in him; "My name is in him," as we are told by God himself, concerning Christ, the great Angel of the covenant. Exod. xxiii. 21. "Provoke him not, for my name is in him." And what is God's name? The Lord, the Lord God, gracious,—as you heard before. My name is in him, that is, my very nature is in him, whereof that name is expressive.

And it is contrary to his design for what? Do you think he came on purpose into this world to save sinners, and yet to let them be lost, when they are willing to take his prescribed way, and comply with his methods? How can

it be so? What, is he not true to himself? Doth he not agree with himself? consist with himself? Hath he forgotten what he died for, what he took human nature for, and what he hung upon an ignominious cross for? All the difficulties he had to contend with for the saving of souls are all overcome and over already. He is to be scourged no more, buffeted no more, crucified no more, to be in travail for souls, and in agonies under the divine anger no more, he hath done all that was toilsome, laborious, and painful, borne all that was grievous and bitter; he hath nothing now to do but what is pleasant work, to emit the influences of life and grace to craving and desiring souls: and so he will do, if the desires of our souls be indeed towards him; he cannot forego himself, and quit his own design; he was so intent upon that design of saving, as to run through the greatest difficulties imaginable, all the terrors of death, and all the powers of hell and darkness could not stand in his way; no, he would make through them all to save souls. Will he then let yours be lost, when you are crying after him, and reaching towards him, to put yourselves into the hands and arms of his saving mercy? It cannot be.

And so as I have shewn how reasonable it is to hope, I shall (God willing) the next time take a text on purpose to shew you how necessary it is to hope, that as from what has been said, you may understand somewhat of the ground of hope in this case, (for you are not to hope without ground,) so you may understand somewhat of the great importance of hope in it too. I shall therefore next (God willing) make it my business to shew of how mighty influence hope is, towards bringing about that great work which is to be done upon souls, in order to their eternal well-being.

SERMON XIV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I DID let you know the last time, that I intended to speak on these words; that as I had shewn you what ground there is of hope for solicitous, awakened souls, that they shall not finally be lost; so they might from thence see of what importance it is to them to hope that they shall be saved. Their very salvation itself depends very greatly upon their hope of it. If there should be any here (which God forbid!) to whom salvation itself is a little thing, the hopes of it cannot but be less. If there should be any with whom it is inconsiderable, and who do not use to trouble their thoughts with any such matter, whether they be saved or not saved; the hope of being saved cannot with such, but by consequence, be very inconsiderable; a thing that will weigh very little with them.

But for such whom God hath awakened, and made to bestir themselves, such as are afraid of perishing, and to whom destruction from the Almighty is a terror, such whose hearts tremble within them, to think of any possibility or hazard that they may yet be lost under a gospel of salvation; to such (methinks) these words should carry a grateful reviving sound.

And as they must be supposed to have this their wont, to revive this great question upon their minds, and be at it upon their hearts; What (oh what!) shall I do that I may be saved? Methinks it should be grateful to them to have so apposite and present an answer to their question,—why, you are to be saved by hope. The hope of being saved must do something to save you.

We know by common experience, that hope is that mighty powerful engine, which moves all the intelligent world, and rules and governs the whole frame and course of rational nature every where; so as that no design is driven on, no undertaking ever set on foot, but as men are

* Preached May 17, 1691.

influenced, and led on by hope. In reference to any thing whereof they have no hope, they sit still and do nothing.

And as it is so in reference to common affairs, it would be proportionably so too, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, if this great engine, which is planted in the very soul of every man, were but rightly and duly managed and turned this way. And so much the more effectual it must be, and work with so much the more energy, by how much the more its ground is better and firmer, in reference to those affairs that do relate to our souls, and to our final salvation. God hath set no such connection between the most earnest endeavours and answerable success, with reference to external and secular affairs. He hath given men no ground to be confident, that if they labour to be rich, they shall be rich; if they labour to be great and honourable in the world, they shall be so: but he hath given sufficient ground to be confident, that no man that seriously mindeth and manageth the affairs relating to his salvation, shall be lost. Therefore, whereas in reference to other affairs, hope is the *causa sine qua non*, here it is the *causa sine qua non et cum qua*; that is, in reference to other affairs, hope is the principle, without which nothing could be done or attempted; but in reference to those affairs that relate to our final and eternal well being, not only the attempt, but a good issue, will ensue upon the use of a true hope.

And that is it therefore which I design to insist on from this scripture; That is, to shew you, (which you must take for the ground of our discourse,)

Doctrine. That whosoever are finally saved, are saved by hope. And in speaking to this I shall shew,

1. What this hope is, of which this is said.
2. What influence it hath towards our salvation.

1. What this hope is. It would be a very useless thing to discourse philosophically to you about hope in general; which every one doth better understand by feeling, by the sensation he hath of it in his own mind, than he could do by the most accurate definition of a philosopher. It is easy to be collected what hope in general is, by considering the nature of man, and his present state, in comparison with one another. The nature of man makes him covet to be happy, and he finds his present state admits of no such thing; whereupon hope is that passion which must of course arise from such a complexion of the rational nature, and such a state of the common case of men. "It is that passion of the soul, by which it reacheth forth itself

to the uttermost, in the pursuit of somewhat that appears to be good, and likely to better its state, and that is attainable, possible to be attained, but not to be attained without difficulty." This is hope in general.

But when we have this account of hope in the general notion of it, we are yet to seek of what hope this is said, that it saves, that we are saved by it. We are sure this is not universally true of all hope. There is much hope in the world that signifies nothing to men's salvation; yea, much that signifies a great deal to their destruction. Many are not only lost, notwithstanding their hopes, but they are destroyed by them: they might have been safe and happy if they had had no such hope.

And therefore, what this hope is, concerning which this is said, we are more narrowly to inquire: and we do not find that the text itself doth suffice to give us a distinguishable account of it. It doth not assign its proper characters; it describes it no way, but only by its remote final issue, —We are saved by it.

But since it is manifest that all hope doth not save, and that much hope doth destroy, it is sufficiently intimated to us, that there must be somewhat very particular and distinguishing in the nature of that hope, to which this effect is ascribed, when we are told we are saved by it. It is intimated to us, that there is an hope that is saving. We must consider in what sense therefore hope may be said to be saving. It is in a twofold sense that hope may admit to have this said of it, in opposition to such hope of which it cannot be said.

1. As salvation hath a certain connection with it. There is an hope with which it hath a certain connection; a hope true at first, and which therefore continues, and which being continued, doth terminate upon salvation, and takes hold of it, as all of apiece with it. "Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter i. 13. When we are there told of "receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls;" verse 9. and are told of "them that believe, to the saving of the soul;" Heb. x. last verse; we find this believing, or that faith, described in the very next words, Heb. xi. 1. "to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" so that faith and hope (we may shew you hereafter with what difference) have their exercise upon one and the same objects, till they actually end in

salvation, with which therefore they have a firm and immediate connection; even as a thing hath with itself; as that which is begun, and is yet imperfect, has with the same thing having arrived to its consummate and perfect state. But then,

2. Hope may be said also to be saving, not where it hath an immediate connection only with salvation, but where also it hath a leadingness and tendency thereunto, though that effect may not certainly ensue. And accordingly there must be a twofold hope. There is an hope that we are to reckon an effect of the Spirit of holiness, a real part of the new creature, a divine production in the soul. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. There is such a hope as that; and there is also a rational human hope, which may have its exercise about the same thing, about the same final object, and about many things that lie intermediate thereunto, as means for the attaining of it; and which, being assisted by the common grace of the Spirit, may end in the former hope, and consequently in salvation. Now it is the former hope that must be aimed at, and for this latter hope it is neither to be rejected nor rested in. It is not to be rejected.—A rational human hope, as such, when it is employed about divine objects, while we have no more in us, if any have nothing more, yet in him; this he ought not to reject, nor ought he to rest in it by any means; but labour to cherish it as an improvable thing, as that which by the influence and operation of the Divine Spirit falling in, may be heightened and raised up into that which shall be certainly saving hope; or the hope that shall be in immediate next connection with salvation. And both these are very distinguishable from the hope that hath no tendency to save, but hath a most direct aptitude in it to destroy, ruin, and undo souls for ever. They are both of them very distinguishable from that. And to speak a little more particularly, I shall therefore here,

1. Shew you what hope it is that hath not this tendency, and is not like to have this end of saving. And,

2. Then shall shew you what it is.

1. What hope is not saving? It is not that which is quite wrong and false, both as to its object, and as to its ground; or in reference to the one or the other of these. Take them distinctively, that hope which is wrong, either

as to its object or as to its ground, is none of the hope that hath any tendency to the saving of us.

1. If it be wrong as to its object, its material object, the thing we hope for; if that be quite alien, and of another kind from the business of our salvation, and final felicity, it can contribute nothing thereto: all that hope wherein the minds of men do go besides the proper business, and run into things of quite another kind: it is plain that hope can do a man no good, in order to his being saved. That hope whereof the object is a worldly felicity, or prosperity, whether it be for one-self, or whether it be the felicity or prosperity of any party of men in secular respects, to which he hath thought fit to adjoin himself, and to make one with: this can signify nothing, it is plain, to the saving of him. "If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. xv. 19. This hope doth not only not save, but it destroys, carnalizes men's minds, habituateth them to this earth, and transforms them into the image of it. And do men think to carry a piece of earth with them up into heaven, when that is all their hope terminateth upon, or is concerned about? No; this is so far from helping to their salvation, that it hurts and hinders all that can be. It is by such an inclination of mind as this, that men run themselves into snares and temptations, and come at length to be drowned in perdition and destruction. 1 Tim. vi. 9. The root of all evil is that very desire that is twisted into this hope. And suppose it be a good state of things in this world, from any community or party to which they have adjoined themselves, so as that their minds and hopes fly no higher, but only that things may go well with them and their party, here in an earthly state. This signifies as little to final, eternal salvation; yea, though the party and design be never so right with which any such have united themselves. It is very true, it is no unlawful thing, yea, it is an highly commendable thing, a praiseworthy thing, to have one's mind very much concerned and taken up about the prosperity and success of a just cause, of a good and honest interest in this world, supposing these two things be provided against.

(1.) That we do not mind and employ our thoughts and hopes about things of that nature finally and terminatively, so as to exclude the great things of the other world, and that last end that runs into eternity. An everlasting felicity to ourselves and the church of God, wherein he is to

have out of us, and from all, his entire, complete, and consummate glory. Supposing that the intention of our minds and thoughts, and the exercises of our hopes about these temporary things, do not exclude and shut out their higher and more vigorous exercise, proportionably to the higher excellency of the things themselves, about these superior things. Supposing that in the first place. And,

(2.) Supposing too, that we do not so mind such concernments, as thereby to debase and weaken religion. It is a very usual thing, and hardly to be avoided, and which is actually avoided (I doubt) but by a few, where there is a complication of secular interests and religious interests, together with one another, so to let our minds be involved and run into the one as to look off from the other. And thereby in that very complication, religion suffers, 1st. A debasement; and 2nd. A defilement, an enfeeblement; it is made a weak thing first, and thereupon a feeble and impotent thing. But how few are there in the world that do mind the concernments of it, in reference to the concernments of another world; and that do exercise their thoughts about its present concernments with an universalized mind, a truly enlarged mind, that takes in the interests of God and Christ as the main thing, and the interests of men as men, and of christians as christians, under a common notion? But how mean is it, and debasing to the spirit of a man, and how enfeebling to religion itself, when all the intention of men's souls runs about the little separate interests of this or that party, even as it is such, without considering the reference of things to God and the Redeemer? It is this that hath made religion a mean, sordid, terrene, and earthly thing. A political religion is that which, of all things, I cannot but consider with dread, according as I find verging, degenerating, and declining more and more into that. Let each orb be kept apart, and distinct from one another; and religion for the proper ends and purposes of religion, to refine men's minds, to bring them nearer to God, to make them capable of his converse and enjoyment, and to fit them for a blessed eternity. Let religion do its own work as such; and let all secular concernments be only minded in subserviency hereto, as they serve to promote the interest of such religion, as is really worthy the name, and will do the work of religion. But in the mean time, hopes that do fill the minds of men with thoughts about, whether their own private, or more common and public secular affairs, so as to eat up the thoughts

of heaven, and to emasculate the strength and vigour of their spirits, that should work thitherward: all these hopes signify no more than a dream towards their salvation; and have no more reference to it, but to prejudice and to hinder our pursuit of it, and our final attaining of it. And,

2. Suppose that hope be placed on salvation itself, (and certainly that hope must subserve to salvation, must be the hope of salvation, as it is called, 1. Thes. v. 8.) yet if the ground of it be wrong, it can signify nothing to this end. If a man hope to be saved upon no ground that will bear the burden of such an hope, or that can rationally support it. That is,

(1.) If men do hope in themselves, if they hope to be saved from their own worthiness, through the apprehensions they have, whether of their own excellency, or if it be but of their own innocency; here is an hope that will betray them to perdition, while it is with them the hope of salvation. Or again,

(2.) If they hope in Christ, but not upon his terms: many are very full of hopes that they shall be saved; and confess themselves to be sinners, and pretend to despair of being saved for their own sakes, or upon their own account; but it must be for Christ's sake, and upon his account. But then they hope for it upon none of his terms: as if a man hope to be saved by Christ, without ever being made holy by him. "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself." 1 John iii. 3. It must be an hope right first, as to its end, as to its final object: that is, an hope of seeing God as he is, and then right as to the way; that is, of being made like him, as that which only can agree with such a vision, or make the soul capable of it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, (it may well enough be understood of Christ, to have reference to him,) purifies himself, as he is pure;" that hope, it will attemper the soul to the final object. It is exercised, and taken up about a state wherein men are to be like God, upon their seeing of him as he is; "every one that hath this hope, purifies himself." It drains the soul from terrene dross, and from every thing that is defiling and impure: a man cannot converse with so glorious objects but by an hope that carries (as it were) a printive power and property with it; for it is by hope that we do enjoy the object hoped for at a distance. This I say,

cannot be, but that objects will impress their image, and beget somewhat like themselves in the soul. The soul that is directed and carried, by the power of its own expectation, to a continual converse with God, as him whom he expects to see as he is, and to be made perfectly like him, by the power of this hope, it will be growing liker and liker to him, and will be purifying itself as he is pure. But he that hopes to be saved, without ever undergoing any such change in the present temper of his spirit, he that hopes to be saved without ever being regenerate, he that hopes to be saved against the plain word of Christ, is so far from hoping upon his terms, that he doth hope against the terms which he hath expressly laid down in the gospel; whereas he hath said in his gospel, "Except a man be born again," John iii. 5. except a man be regenerate, born from above, (as the word admits to be read,) he can never see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Yet I will hope that I shall enter into that kingdom, and possess that kingdom, though I never be regenerate, though I remain the same man I was all my days.

And whereas Christ hath said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3. yet men will hope they shall be saved, though they never repent. And whereas Christ hath said, they that believe "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. they will yet hope to be saved without gospel faith; and that, notwithstanding the gospel itself so expressly saith, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" Mark xvi. 16. "he that believeth not is condemned already;" John iii. 18. "he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. And whereas, again, the word of the gospel hath said that Christ will be the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," Heb. v. 9. men will yet hope that he shall be to them the author of eternal salvation, though they continually disobey him, and live in affronts to him, to his known laws, and the sceptre of his government; and that, also, notwithstanding he hath so expressly said that Christ will "come in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon all that obey not his gospel." 2 Thess. i. 8. Such as do hope for salvation by Christ altogether without ground, are never to think that that hope will save them, but betray them into perdition, or at length, be the very instrument of a self-destruction to them; their own instrument, and of their own destruction. This is an hope that will never save, but will do more to destroy than to save

them. That hope, that is first totally wrong in its object; and, secondly, is altogether without ground, be the object what it will, yet it rests upon no ground that can sustain such an hope. But then,

2. We shall briefly shew what the hope must be that hath this tendency to save; hath (at least) a tendency to it. It must,

(1.) Be an hope rightly terminated as to its object. As I told you before, it must be the hope of salvation, which is said to be that part of the spiritual armour, which is thought fit to be expressed by the name of an helmet. The helmet is to defend the head. You all know the head is the seat of design, where projects are formed, where counsels are laid. Now no man (as you heard before) designs for that of which he hath no hope; that confounds all designs. If a man hath formed in his head never so specious models; when once any thing appears in view which shews the whole business to be impracticable, so as there is no hope of succeeding, all those models are confounded and lost; there is an end of them. Therefore, there needs an helmet to protect the head, the seat of counsels and designs. And this is that which doth it,—"the hope of salvation." If there be a firm, well-laid hope of salvation, this keeps the mind clear, and in a composed posture, ready still for deliberation, and to contrive the way, and course, and method, that may best serve on the one hand, and to countermine whatsoever may obstruct, and hinder in the prosecution of it, on the other hand. This hope must have for its final object the divine glory and likeness, as that which we are to behold, as that which we are to bear, as that into which we are to be transformed; as above in this chapter; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And it is the hope of this that saves, taking in the other requisites, of which you will hear more hereafter. So, (Rom. v. 1, 2.) "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope"—of what?—"of the glory of God." The great thing that terminates this hope must be "salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal glory." As the apostle conjoins the privative and positive expressions there; whereas, when there is no such conjunction, either put alone serves for both, when a man's hope is pitched upon this final term and end; that (as was intimated before) draws his heart, and keeps it under the transforming influ-

ence of the object which the Divine Spirit accompanies. The Divine Spirit doth the transforming work, even at first, and progressively afterwards; but it doth it by objects, by glorious objects, by objects blending in the gospel. We are first changed, and continually "changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" but it is "by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. last verse. And then,

(2.) This hope must be right as to its ground, as well as in reference to its object; and that can be nothing else but the covenant of God in Christ,—God in Christ to be apprehended and closed with in a covenant; or, as he is pleased to give a sinner the advantage of taking hold of him, as he hath brought himself under the bonds of a covenant. I will be such and such to you; my Son shall be such and such to you. I engage in a covenant: it shall be so, if you take hold. Here is the only firm, secure ground of such an hope; and this is that which the soul actually must do, or must (at least) be actually designing to do; and accordingly may its hope be either certainly saving, or have a leadingness and tendency thereunto, as was told you before. If the heart can bear record in the sight of God, I have taken hold of the gospel-covenant, and therein of God in Christ upon gospel-terms, my heart regretting nothing of them; but readily, and with good liking falling in with every thing; then I have that hope in me, that, while it lasts, is a piece of salvation; salvation and it are of a piece.

But suppose I am not arrived to that pitch yet, that I dare avow it before the Lord, that I have come to such a closure; I am not sure of the sincerity of my own heart; yet, if this be the thing I design, I abandon all other hopes, and all other grounds of hope; and this is that I am aiming and driving at, to come to a sincere closure with God in Christ upon the terms of the gospel. I do not yet know whether I am come up to it fully or not; but I am aiming at it, making towards it as I can. This, even this is saving hope, in one of the senses before explained; that is, as having a tendency and leadingness to salvation; and which, as it is not to be rested in till it come to a plerophery; so, nor is it to be rejected neither; it is to be cherished and complied with. God may make somewhat of this more trembling hope, though my anchor be not yet so firmly cast within the veil, or I do not know that it is; while I yet abandon and renounce all other hopes, and look to be saved in no other way; and am aiming to be saved

in this way, it is a good sign, for there can be no aim without some hope; total despair throweth you off from every thing of endeavour, and every thing of design, for heaven and eternity; gives you up to perish, and delivers you up to eternal perdition. But while you cannot say your hope is saving, as that which will certainly save you at last, yet it may be said to be saving while it is tending towards a state of salvation, and carrying your hearts forwards towards that state. And this account, that is, that though you are not sure you have actually built upon the proper ground, yet you have the proper ground in view before you, and there you design to build, and you will build no where else. Why all this, while there is that hope which hath a leadingness and tendency to salvation, and which ought to be cherished, that it may save. When it is so far (as hath been said) right, as to its object, and when it is so far designingly right as to its ground. This, in the one sense or the other, is the thing whereof the text speaks; "We are saved by hope." Then,

2. The second thing is, to shew the influence that such hope hath upon, and towards salvation; and that would be very easy to shew you by representing to you what it is that is necessary to salvation; or what are the certain characters of the saved ones. They do make a select community, distinct from all the rest of the world. The nations of them that are saved, (as they are called Rev. xxi. 24.) they are all gathered into that city of God; they make a very distinct community from all the rest of the world; and must be understood to be distinguished from them by that which is characteristical of them that are saved ones. And so the distinction must consist in something or other that doth notify them to be the subjects of salvation. If it doth appear that such an hope be necessary to that, it must be concluded to be necessary to salvation too. That that is necessary for that which is necessary for salvation, is itself too necessary to salvation: *Causa causæ est causa causati;* do but agree what thing or things are necessary to salvation, and if hope have a necessary influence upon these things, it must itself be in the way to salvation also. And if it be productive of those things it will be productive of salvation too; and not only be the cause without which salvation cannot be, but by which it will be.

Now it is very plain that these two things are necessary to salvation:

1. Thorough conversion; the bringing of a person into a state of grace:—And,

2. Continual perseverance therein unto the end. Both these are necessary to salvation. And if such hope as we have already in some measure described to you be necessary to both these, it must be necessary to salvation too. And that is it which, in future discourses, I shall labour to shew you; that hope is necessary to conversion first, and then to perseverance. The soul's conversion; its turning to God in Christ, it is with hope; it is not the act of a despairing soul; it cannot be; it is no more possible for a despairing man than for a despairing devil to repent and turn to God, and to close with Christ. I do not speak of the difference of the law; that signifies nothing in this case; but I speak in reference to the complexion of the mind and spirit; and in respect of that, despair would as much keep a sinful man from turning to God through Christ, as it doth an apostate devil.

SERMON XV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THAT which I proposed to do in discoursing to you from this passage was, 1st, to shew what hope that is of which this is said, inasmuch as it is apparently not to be said of all hope. There is an hope that will not save. There is an hope that will destroy; and to that head we have already spoken. We have shewn you what hope it is not; and then have positively shewed you what hope it is, concerning which this is spoken, that it saves. And now,

2. Our further business is to shew you which way hope doth operate towards salvation, or what influence it hath in order thereunto. We told you (entering on this head last time) that the understanding of this matter will depend upon our conceiving aright what is more immediately and certainly necessary to salvation; for if hope will be found to influence such things as are of most apparent confessed

* Preached May 24, 1691.

necessity unto salvation, it will be then found to have a necessary influence on salvation too. If it be necessary to that which is necessary, it must be itself also necessary. And it must be somewhat in itself exceeding great, and so that needs all the suitable and proper influences imaginable to bring it about, that shall distinguish them that are saved from them who shall perish; or, in short, the things that are more immediately necessary to salvation, must be understood to be very great things, and things that are not to be wrought at an easy rate, but which will require the help and concurrence of whatsoever may have an apt subserviency thereto; for the differences of them that are to be saved from them that will be finally lost, must be understood to be fundamental to the eternal differences of heaven and hell. And think how vastly different are the states of men hereafter, who shall be plunged and sunk into an abyss of woe and misery to eternity, and of them who shall be eternally rejoicing and exulting in the highest and most perfect felicity and glory.

There is the embryo of heaven and hell in the very hearts of men on this side both; and therefore the differences must be vastly great, even here in this world, between them that are in a state of salvation and them that are not in that state. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven, they make up the community of them that are to be the saved ones, as was noted from that 21st chapter of Revelations, 24th verse: "The nations of them that are saved do walk in the light thereof." How vastly another sort of men, in all reason, are they to be from the rest of the perishing world, who are to be exempt from the common ruin, who, when the rest of the world must perish in vindictive flames, are to be caught up in the clouds, and meet their Redeemer in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! How vast (I say) must we suppose the differences between these two sorts of men, when there is the seed, the very *primordia* of heaven and hell, the very beginnings of heaven and hell, to be found on earth in these two sorts of men! Therefore the distinction of the saved ones must be great and eminent from those that are not to be saved.

And what is their distinction I have generally told you already. It lies in these two things: in thorough regeneration, or conversion to God, by which they are brought into a good and safe state at first; and then, in their perseverance herein unto the end.

1. They are such as are "born from heaven,"—"from above;" and the expression (John iii. 3, 4.) may as well be read "born from above," as "born again;" they are an heaven-born sort of men; a community of persons that are all of a divine family,—of the family of God, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High; not by adoption only, as if their sonship were no more than a relative thing; but by regeneration too, which is a real thing, and which makes an internal subjective change, the greatest that can be wrought in this world upon the subject where it hath place. By that regenerating impression on them they are turned to God; a divine touch upon their spirits inclines them to him; and now they turn to him with all their hearts and with all their souls. By being turned they turn; passive conversion and regeneration are the same thing. That turning influence by which the whole soul is brought about towards God, is nothing else but the regenerating influence that puts a new nature into them: for it is not a violent turn, but a spontaneous turn; a turn from the inclination of that new nature that is now in them: and in respect of this communicated divine nature are they said to be "born of God," to be "children of the Most High;" or otherwise (as the same thing is elliptically expressed) "they are of God;"—"we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." 1 John v. 19.

2. And being brought into this state, they must persevere in it. It is absolutely necessary that they do so: "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 13. "They that are born of God must overcome the world;" which, indeed, some way or other, sums up all the enemy's power that they are to contend with; for the great destroyer of souls tempts men by this world, and their own flesh is tempted by it; so that, take one of that ternary of enemies, and you take them altogether. They cannot be severed; and he that is born of God must overcome these; in overcoming one, he must overcome all of this ternary of enemies, these adversary powers; and, overcoming, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he overcame, and is sat down with his Father upon his throne." They are such, as, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality," till they actually "obtain everlasting life." Rom. ii. 7. And they are to continue believing, which sums up the whole of that duty which the gospel makes necessary to salvation, till they actually receive "the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls."

1 Peter i. 9. "They must not be of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of their souls." Heb. x. last verse.

Both these are of most absolute necessity to being saved. This is plain, and out of all question; and they are necessary to salvation two ways, both of them, as in their own nature they do dispose and suit the soul for the heavenly state; both for the work, and for the felicity of it. If it were possible that one should come unchanged, unconverted, and unrenewed into heaven, what an exotic thing would he be there? He could have no business there; there is nothing there to be done that he could do; there is nothing there to be enjoyed that he could enjoy. Suppose one in heaven, that were no lover of God, that can take no pleasure in the divine presence, that hath nothing in him of the divine image, what could he do there? And if we could suppose the wisdom of heaven to do so inapt a thing as to admit him thither, to what purpose would it be? Therefore, upon the account of internal, subjective qualification, both these are necessary.

1. There must be a new nature given, that such an one be regenerate, born of God, turned unto him with the whole heart and soul. And that there be a new creation raised up in him, to attemper and suit him to the heavenly state; that is, that there be (as it were) the epitome of a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, in that soul which is designed for that blessed state above. A new creation is to rise up, which is to top heaven, to wit, to lift up its head into heaven, and a blessed eternity. That work is to be wrought in him that is a congenerous thing unto heaven; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, (saith our Lord,) shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life." John iv. 14. The regenerate frame and nature is so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things: and so there can no man ever come into heaven, that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come into him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. xiv. which are the very *primordia* of heaven: righteousness, universal rectitude; and peace, universal tranquillity resulting from most perfect and unexceptionable order; and then joy in the Holy Ghost, that state now taking place, that consists of "fulness of joy, and plea-

sures for evermore. Psalm xvi. last verse. All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one. And then,

2. Perseverance is equally necessary upon the same account, and for the same purpose, under that very notion; for, if it were necessary that such a thing should be, to qualify such and such as subjects for the heavenly state, it must be, for the same reason, necessary to continue and remain. This seed of regeneration must abide; it must continue even to the very last; for the soul is not qualified for the heavenly state by what it was ten or twenty years ago, but by what it is when it comes into it; when it comes actually to possess it, and partake of it.

And then, both these are necessary, not only in the nature of the thing, as internal qualifications of the subject; but they are also necessary as things required by the tenor of the evangelical law of grace, which entitleth none to heaven but those that are regenerate; those that are born of God; and those that, being so, do continue adhering and cleaving to him to the very end; that is, those (as was said before) who do believe to the very saving of their souls.

And you must consider here, that this second necessity of both these things, arising from the gospel constitution, or the constitution of the evangelical covenant, or the law of grace, it comes in this kind to supervene and to be superadded to the other; to wit, considering salvation at length as the effect of the gospel grant; for it is not merely to be looked upon as a natural product, (though you say spiritually natural, or you mean so;) it is not to be considered under that notion, (though it is partly to be considered under it,) but it is withal to be considered under the notion of a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not a mere natural product, nor the product of the divine nature, the spiritual, the holy nature, that is wrought into the soul. It is not (I say) merely such a natural production, but it is to be considered morally too, as the effect of a free donation. And being so a given thing, a thing conferred, then it must be understood to be conferred upon the donor's own terms, the terms that he chooseth, that he is pleased himself to enact and appoint. And these terms are those terms which I have told you of already; "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"—"except ye

be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be saved;" and (as was told you before) " he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And the righteous Judge of all the world, " who will render to every man according to his works;" (Rom. ii. 6.) " he hath determined this, that to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality," he will give " eternal life;" and for the rest, " to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

So far it was necessary to clear to you the immediate requisites to salvation, these two summarily, conversion and perseverance. And now, hereupon, I am to evince to you, that hope hath an influence upon both these; that a man would never turn to God if it were not from the influence of hope; and that being turned, he would never walk with God to the end, never cleave to God to the last, if it were not still from the influence of hope.

I hope you have all so much of gospel-understanding with you as to think, that the asserting such and such a means as necessary, doth not make the end less necessary. We are not to suppose the end (eternal salvation) is less certain, because such means have a certain subserviency thereto; for he that hath appointed the end hath appointed the means too, and settled the connection between them; that is, that there shall be such faith, such a new creature, such holiness; and these shall be continued and maintained till the end be attained; and the end shall be attained hereupon. The necessary subserviency of such means doth not make the end less certain; but more rationally certain, more certain to us, more evident to us, when we see the way chalked out more plainly that leads to it, and in which it is brought about. I say, that nothing is plainer, than that both these are brought about by the influence of hope; both the soul's first conversion and turning to God, and its continuance and perseverance to the end. And, that I may evince the influence of hope as to both these, with the more clearness, there is somewhat that I must premise to make my way the clearer thereto. That is,

1. That God, in his dealings with the souls of men in order to salvation doth work very much upon a natural principle of self-love in them. I say, that, in order to the saving of souls, God, in his dealing with them, doth very much apply himself to a principle of natural self-love. This

is plain, and out of all question. And the precepts, with their sanctions, (the great instruments that he works and moves them by,) do all suppose it. The great gospel precept, "believing in the Son of God," with its sanction admixt, doth plainly suppose it. "Go, preach this gospel to every nation;"—What is this for? In order to believing in general. What is the sanction annexed to this precept?—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are direct applications to the principle of self-love. What can either of these signify by way of argument, but as they do accommodate this principle, and are some way suited thereunto? What doth it weigh to tell such an one, You shall be saved if you believe with a true gospel faith, if he doth not love himself; if he have no love for his own soul? And what doth it weigh to tell such an one, If you do not believe you shall be damned, if he love not his own soul, if he care not what becomes of his soul? Nothing is plainer, than that God doth apply himself to the natural principle of self-love in us, when he comes to deal with us about the affairs of our salvation and eternal well-being. What are heaven and hell laid in open view before us for, in so much amiableness, and in so much terror, but to move this principle of self-love? And then I would premise,

2. Supposing the principle of self-love, the end that every one must design thereupon must suit and answer that principle. And thereupon it will be consequent, that he who is to be saved must be made to design his own salvation; which also the plainest and greatest gospel principles do most significantly and manifestly hold forth to us as matter of indispensable duty; that is, that we are to design our own salvation; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" what doth that signify else? what doth it signify less? "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;"—"strive to enter in at the strait gate;" be ye in agonies in order to it; that is the English of that expression. If the principle of self-love is to be set on work; and if, from that principle, our own salvation is to be designed as our end; then it will be most apparently consequent, that the hope of attaining our end must needs be the great influencing thing upon us, in reference to whatsoever is necessary thereunto. And so,

3. The whole business of conversion we must understand to be influenced by hope, upon the supposal that the person that now lies under the converting work is all the

while designing his own salvation. And here my business is, and will be, to let you see how the many things that are incident, and do fall in together in the business of a man's serious and thorough conversion, and turning to God, must be understood to be influenced by hope throughout. The turning soul is, in its turning, an hoping soul, and would never turn if it did not hope; because it hopes, therefore it turns. The Divine Spirit works all, (it is true;) but it works accommodately and suitably to our nature, to the reasonable intelligent nature in which it works. Do but consider the plain and great things that are carried in this turning, when the soul hath received the impression, or doth now actually receive the impression from God that turns it: and see how manifest it is, that the influence of hope runs into every one. As,

(1.) In this turn wrought upon the soul there is conviction of sin, (as is obvious to every one,) accompanied many times with very great terrors, which have much participation even of hell in them, an affinity with it, a nearness to it. The soul, in order to its being raised and brought as high as heaven, is first (as it were) dipped into hell, brought as near hell as it can come without being plunged and irrecoverably lost and swallowed up of it. And you must consider the soul as an apprehensive thing all the while. You must consider the Divine Spirit working upon an intelligent, rational subject, in this its descent. The soul descends with open eyes, and it descends with a kind of consent, let me go down and visit my own deserved portion and lot. It descends an apprehensive thing, an open-eyed thing, and voluntarily; there is a voluntariness in it; but that there could never be if there were no hope. I am content to go down, and descend even to the very brink and verge of the infernal pit; but I go down with hope, that God will not plunge me in it; that he will not lose me, and let me be swallowed up there; even while it is beset with amazing terrors, they are not the terrors of total despair, then it were to be turned into a mere devil; total despair would make it so. But though there may be so great fear, the soul seems, it may be, to itself, a composition of fear; there is, however, a secret influence of hope; though he shake me over hell, he will not throw me into it; he will, in mercy to my soul, "save me from going down into the pit:" while it is convinced, it hopes; and the more it hopes the more easily it admits of conviction: As vile a wretch as I am, as any representation could make

me, I hope God will not utterly cast me off. The convictions that are accompanied with terror are not accompanied with hope; it is undespairing terror.

(2.) There is in this converting work deep and serious humiliation, which is a farther thing than mere conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deserts of it; which hath for its seat and subject of it, the heart, a tender heart, a relenting heart, a broken, melting heart. This is carried in the work of conversion; but this can never be without hope. All the terror in the world will never melt a soul, but hope will. Hope makes it to dissolve, makes it to relent; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Lam. iii. 29. Is there hope for me?—then I care not how low I lie; then let me humble myself to the lowest that is possible at the footstool of the mercy-seat; for I see there is hope for me. Despair would harden the heart, and render it as a rock, impenetrable, inflexible. But hope makes it to melt and dissolve. There is the greatest horror (to be sure) in hell itself, where there is the most absolute perfect despair; and so that fire, even the fire of the infernal pit, that scorches, that enrages, that exasperates, that inflames the soul with enmity, malignity, and hatred against the very Author of its being. But it is another kind of fire that melts. Hell fire will scorch, but it will not melt. It is the spirit of divine love in the gospel that only melts; and if it melts it gives ground of hope, as God is revealed reconcileable and willing to be at peace. When the gospel saith so, and the Spirit breathes in that gospel, and declares to the soul immediately, God is reconcilable; now is the heart clothed with shame and confusion, and lies low in self-abasement, even to the very lowest it can lay itself; "that thou mayest be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord." Ezek. xvi. latter end. That is, when I have shewn thee how willing I am to be reconciled, revealed myself so pacifiable, reconcileable, and given thee hope of pardon, mercy, and grace, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have discovered myself so placable towards thee, and so willing to be reconciled. And again,

(3.) There is in this converting work, a mortification endured and undergone, even of the most con-natural corruptions, and evil inclinations. The soul endures the cut-

ting off the right hand and the right foot, and putting out the right eye; and submits to the command, *Ure, Seca,* as that Father is brought in saying, Lord, burn me, wound me, cut me, so thou wilt but save me! I matter it not. What? Cutting off the right hands and feet, and plucking out the right eyes?—this would never be endured if it were not for hope. Here is in this turn a denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever, under the instruction of grace, under the instruction of *that* grace, which appears bringing salvation, and that teaches us this denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts. And how, and in what way?—"Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." While I yield and submit to such things as these, to be pulled away from all ungodliness, and to have all my worldly lusts torn from me, it is in the contemplation of that blessed hope. Oh, how comfortably shall I behold Christ, and will he behold me, who have endured all this for his pleasure! The pleasures of sin are abandoned, which are but for a season. And why?—Because there is an eye had to the recompense of the reward; and because that faith begins now to take hold of the soul, that is "the substance of things hoped for." Heb. xi. 1. compared with what is mentioned in the 26th and 27th verses. And again,

(4.) There is in this work of conversion a forsaking of all the world; that is the term the soul turns from, when God is the term it turns unto; a forsaking of all this world, as a most despicable thing, a composition of idols; and what have I to do with idols? saith the turning, the returning soul. What have I any more to do with them? "Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. And what can make a man abandon a thing he hath loved, but the hope of a better?—I shall meet with something better, something that will be a rich compensation for all that I abandon and throw away. We find those converts to whom the Apostle Peter writes his first epistle, that they were thrown out of all for Christ and the gospel's sake: elect strangers, scattered throughout the several quarters of Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, and wherever else scattered they were; driven from their own home and inheritance. And how came they to yield to all this; to quit all they had in this world, and betake themselves to wandering? Why, it was for the sake of Christ. You have

" been begotten (saith the Apostle) to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This was in their very regeneration; this was among their *natulitia*, the principles of their birth, their new divine birth. A certain hope of better things than they were to lose for the sake of Christ and the gospel. They were to lose all their earthly inheritances; no matter for that, " we are begotten again to a lively hope" of such an inheritance; and we shall be kept to it,—" kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation;" as there it follows in the same context. And,

(5.) Here must be in this work of conversion a serious, solemn taking of God for our God, when the soul is so far loosened and unhinged from sin, and from this world, to which it did cleave by sinful inclination. Then are things so prepared and made ready for its unitive closure with that great object, from whom it hath injuriously withheld itself all this while; and unto whom, out of the state of apostasy, it must now betake itself, and is now betaking itself. Now having thrown off this world, and being loosened, and saving myself, by the help and power of thy grace, from the bands and cords of my own iniquity, I come, blessed God, to accept of, and unite with thee, to take thee for my Lord and my God. Here is the term to which the soul turns, when sin and the world were the terms from which it did turn. But now, I pray, do any of you think that a soul ever took God for its God with despair?—or doth it ever take God for its God without hope? To be without God, and without hope, they come together; and to be with God, and with hope, must parineam be joined together too. " Ye are without Christ and without God in the world," (saith the Apostle to the Ephesians, referring to their natural unconverted state, Ephes. ii. 12.) when the case herein is changed, that the soul is no longer without God, then it is no longer without hope. It would be without God, if it still were without hope; but it having conceived an hope, that God is graciously and most condescendingly willing to be embraced by such a poor wretched thing as I am, he will permit himself to be embraced; I hope he will, I say; because it hopes therefore it chooses, therefore it accepts him, therefore it takes him. This God shall be my God; he takes him under hope; he covenants with him under hope.

You see how the case was with apostate Israel; they

were gone off from God, and he threw them off, when he abandoned them to the captivity; well, he hath, at length, gracious inclinations towards them, and within the appointed limits of time revisiteth them, releaseth them, and bringeth them back into their own land. And then the great assembly of them, in the posture of penitents, (as you read in the 10th of Ezra,) is gathered together, and the result is, "Come, now, and let us make a covenant with God." They are for covenanting with him; they have a mind to have this God for their God again. But how is this introduced? Now, because "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing," therefore let us make a covenant; since there is hope, let us do this; since there is still some ground for hope, that God is taking up the controversy, and will not abandon us finally, and quite throw us off, and cast us away from being his people; "because there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, therefore let us make a covenant." Every particular soul, upon its return to God, hath in it the epitome of this very case; I have been a wandering wretch, a revolted creature, an apostate rebel; God hath discovered himself, however, placable and willing of my return, and that I strike a covenant with him anew; and he hath published this to be the tenor of his covenant, "I will be your God;" and I am to give my consent to it, and take him hereupon for my God. Now this (I say) the soul only doth because there is hope; I will make a covenant, because I see there is hope in this thing. If I make none, I am lost; if I do not covenant, I am undone; if I will be still a stranger to God, there is no way but to perish. But because there is hope I will covenant, I will take him for my God; because there is hope he will accept a poor returning soul. And,

(6.) In this work of conversion there must be an absolute self-denial, self-abnegation, an abandoning one's-self. This is the plain state of the case; conversion being that by which the soul enters into the Christian state of discipleship to Christ; and Christ himself hath determined the matter; "Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple;" he can be no disciple of mine except he deny himself; because Christ's business with all that he christianizeth, that he admits and takes to be his disciples, is but to take and lead them back to God; and that they are never capable of till he takes them off from their rival god. Self is their rival god; and in this converting work the soul must abandon itself, must deny itself, so as no longer

to live according to its own will, as its rule; nor for its own interest, as its end. I am to live (saith the soul) a self-governed, a self-designing creature, no longer. I told you before of a very lawful and necessary self-love; that is, a love to a man's soul, and a true desire of his own felicity; but that self that is to be denied is a carnal self, a brutal self, that is now become ourselves, become the whole of us; and so it comes to this with every returning soul; I am not I; *Ego non sum Ego.* There is a self to which it doth adhere, and there is a self, the which it doth abandon and forsake; but, through the influence of hope, because I have hope in losing myself, I shall find myself; because I have hope, that, in throwing away this base, sordid self, I shall find and gain a rich glorious hope, self-conformed to the divine likeness; and, finally, made happy in him. Therefore I endure such severities as these; and I do endure all in hope.

Here is in all this sowing to the Spirit, which sowing requires the breaking up the fallow ground beforehand, and the tearing out of weeds and roots, that did infest. And this is in order to such sowing to the Spirit, and that is with expectation of reaping of the Spirit what shall be suitable to it; and "they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." But now you know, (as the Apostle teacheth us to conceive, and to speak elsewhere upon another account,) every one "that soweth, soweth in hope; and he that plougheth, plougheth in hope," that he may be partaker of his hope. 1 Cor. ix. 10. When I give over sowing to my own flesh, pleasing and indulging of that, and begin to sow to the Spirit, as my ploughing before was ploughing in hope, my sowing now is sowing in hope. I would neither plough or sow, but only in hope; so it is in a spiritual sense. And hereupon,

(7.) There is in this work of conversion, a giving one-self up quite unto God, absolutely to be his; you have taken him to be your's; you abandon self thereupon, and therewithal; and now you give up yourself to be his. And is this an act of despair, when a man gives up himself to God? "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead," as the charge is, Rom. vi. 13. Is this giving or yielding ourselves to God a yielding one-self to perish?—or is this the act of a despairing soul, when it saith, I will be the Lord's? Though he saith, absolutely, Let him do with me what he will, yet it always apprehends he will not destroy me. When I yield myself to him; when I

put myself into his hands by my own act and deed, by my free and voluntary surrender, I know he will never destroy what I so voluntarily resign. And again,

(8.) There is hereupon a resolution of walking in the way of holiness; I have chosen the way of truth; that I will do whatever it cost me. And this cannot be but in hope neither. I shall find a pleasure in this way, though it seem uncouth at the first; I shall find safety in it at length, at the latter end. Because I hope, therefore I choose. And there is, hereupon,

(9.) An abandoning of all associates that any have united themselves with in an evil way; a forsaking of them all; a breaking off from them. They that have been my companions in wickedness shall be my companions no longer, unless they will accompany me in the ways of God. This cannot be but in hope. There is an irksomeness in it, parting with those with whom we had all pleasantness of wit and raillery, and a delicious conversation, according to the gusts and relishes of impure imagination. And these relishes cannot be forsaken and abandoned, but upon the hopes of better. Now I shall be the associate of the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom by baptismal vow I have been given up, and to whom now also I have afresh given up myself. Those that know, not only what it is to leave the ways of sin, but their accomplices in wickedness, do know withal that there is difficulty in it, to which they need this powerful inducement of hope, that there will be that at length which will recompense and make up all to me.

SERMON XVI.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THERE is one, and a main thing yet behind, which I reserved to the last place, because there is most to be said to it. That is,

* Preached April 26, 1691.

(10.) That in this converting work there is a solemn closure with Christ; a passing quite into a vital union with him, so as that the soul comes thereby to be in him, and Christ comes to be in the soul. And this transaction could never be brought about but under hope. Christ will never come to be in that united state with you by your own consent and choice, if he were not eyed by you under this notion, "Christ in us the hope of glory;" Christ is to be mine, as my great hope, for eternity, and another world. And this transaction and contracting with Christ I reserved to the last place, not as if it were the last in time in the great work of conversion, but as that which I design to speak more largely unto.

As for the method and order wherein all these mentioned things lie to one another, and wherein they may be effected and wrought in the souls of men, it may vary, and not be always the same. Some thoughts may be injected into some minds first, and others first into others. And though suitable and correspondent impressions be made according to injections of thoughts, yet the Spirit doth not always keep one way; though some things must, in their own nature, precede, yet there is certainly an intention of an end always before the use of the means. With all rational agents and movements the end must be propounded that they design for; and then the way taken that is accommodated to that end. And so the eye of the soul must be towards God finally; first, as him that I am to return to, and then come to a closure with him, in whom he only is accessible. In reference to that, singly considered, that peculiar method is observed, though there are other things that have been mentioned which may partly precede, and partly follow.

But this is that I would now insist upon, and make out to you, that, as in the work of conversion and regeneration, the soul is brought to an agreement with the Son of God, as the Redeemer, Saviour, and Ruler of sinners; so it is brought to this by the influence and power of hope; and it could never come to this agreement with Christ otherwise, but as its hope doth influence it hereunto. Most plain it is, that, wheresoever a work of conversion is brought about, and any do become Christians indeed, they are brought into Christ, they are brought to have an inbeing in Christ, (as the Scripture phrase is, and that we must keep to, and labour to understand the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God in it,) Christ is nothing to

us, till we be in him; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. That is, he is every thing to us that our case requires and needs, if once we be in him; and nothing if we be not in him: whereas we are foolish creatures, he is made to us wisdom; whereas we are guilty creatures, he is made unto us righteousness; whereas we are impure creatures, he is made unto us sanctification; and whereas we are enslaved creatures, he is made unto us redemption, if we be in him; but nothing of all these if we be not in him. When God deals with souls in order to the renewing of them, they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to walk in them. Ephes. ii. 10. When he creates the new creature, it is said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new. 2 Cor. v. 17. This is the great thing that is brought about in the work of conversion or regeneration, or the work of the new creation, which are various scripture expressions of the same thing. The giving the soul an in-being in Christ; inverting, implanting it into him, or (which is all one) bringing about an union between Christ and the soul; in respect whereof that union is so intimate, that he is sometimes said to be in it, and it is sometimes said to be in him. They are mutually in one another. This we must consider is the thing effected in conversion, and which we are to shew you, cannot be effected but by the influence of hope.

Nothing can be more suitable to the Apostle's present scope, than to insist upon this, and evince it to you; for do but observe how he begins this chapter, and take notice how the whole series of his discourse proceeds upon the supposition of this one thing, their being in Christ; having spoken in the foregoing chapter, of the conflict, the war that is between the fleshly principle, and the spiritual principle; and the victory of the Spirit over the flesh, in all that are sincere, and where there is a thorough regenerating work wrought, thereupon he begins this chapter thus, "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" whereby he plainly signifies to us, that the fleshly principle ceaseth to govern, and it ceaseth to condemn at the same time; when sin doth no longer reign, it no longer condemns. This mighty turn and change is brought about in the state of such a person, and in the frame and temper of such an one's spirit, at one and the same time; to wit,

he is now no longer condemned for sin, and he is no longer governed by it. There is no condemnation, and they no longer walk after the flesh, but after the spirit. But whence is it, that he hath this double privilege, or that this mighty turn and change is made in the state of his case? Why, now he is in Christ, he hath been instated in Christ, and now he is neither condemned for sin, nor governed by it.

And upon this supposition of persons being once in Christ, proceeds all the following discourse, through the residue of this chapter. So that now take such an one, suppose him giving (as it were) his account, standing on the brink of the rapid gulph, out of which he newly emergeth, and by grace enabled to spring forth, and make his escape: suppose we such an one, giving an account of his deliverance, and how it was brought about: You that were plunged in so deep and horrid a gulph, and so dreadful impurities, how comes it to be otherwise with you now? Why, I have been brought into Christ, and so, through the grace of God, is my state safe and comfortable. I was tossed in the common deluge and inundation of wickedness and wrath, that had spread itself over all this world; and this was my case, till I came to be in-arked in Christ, and so I became safe. But how came you unto him? or what made you offer at any such thing? Why, I can give you but this account in the general, I am saved by hope; if I had no hope, I had been lost, sunk, and perished for ever; but here was the offer made me of a Redeemer and Saviour, and I hoped it was by one that had no design to deceive me; and there I cast my anchor, and I am come to an agreement with the Son of God, the Saviour! And thus I come to be in this safe state. Safe I am through grace, and I own it, I am safe through hope.—I had been lost else, if I had no hope, and should never have looked after Jesus Christ;—but I had hope when the gospel discovery and representation, and offer of Christ was made to me, that it was by one that could not fail, and would not deceive; one that was not impotent, and too weak to save me, and one that would never be false and untrue to me, if I ventured upon him; and because I had hope, therefore I ventured, and so I am come to this safe state. It is by the influence of hope, that souls are brought into that agreement with the Son of God, upon which their eternal salvation and well-being depends. This is that I have to

make out to you, to wit, that the soul in its first eyeing of Christ, doth eye him as the only hope of sinners.

It is observable how the Apostle begins that first epistle of his to Timothy, in which a little after the beginning, he tells us in that great transport of spirit, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners." But see (I say) how he begins that very chapter and epistle; "Paul an Apostle of God, and of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, and our Saviour, who is our hope." His heart was full of this thing,—That Christ was the great hope of sinners;—and naturally breaks forth into such expressions as those that do afterwards follow: and being replenished with this sense, having his heart full of it saith, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He is represented and held forth in the gospel, under such a representation as doth signify him to be the great and only hope of souls: so he is closed with, so he is received, so the soul resigns and gives up itself at length unto him.

We see that under that notion, he is laid hold on. Look to that; Heb. vi. 18. "By two immutable things, by which it was impossible for God to lie, (to wit, the oath of God added to his word,) the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." An allusion to the manslayer, one that had by casualty (but within the meaning of the law that gave immunity in such cases) slain another, for whom the cities of refuge were appointed and provided, with respect to the several tribes. This is the representation of the case of a sinner frighted and pursued by the *vindicta* of the divine law and justice; such have no way of escape remaining to them, but to fly for refuge to that hope that is set before them: that is, to Christ, the great antitype to those types,—these cities of refuge were so many types of him. But where is he to be eyed and followed now? He is entered as a forerunner into the holy of holies, he is gone within the veil, and thither our hope must follow him, as you may see in the close of that chapter; "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; whither Jesus our forerunner is for us entered." I can have no hope (saith the pursued soul) but in Christ. But where will you find him? He is gone far enough out of sight, he

is entered within the veil, the heavens have received him. But yet (saith the soul) I mean to follow him thither, and my hope shall enter there, even within the veil, whither Christ is for me entered; I will not be held off from him. So this laying hold upon this hope is to be understood; hope is objectively taken there, the hope set before them; it is coming to an agreement, a contract with Christ. It is that by which we actually become entered into the covenant of God by Christ, we can take hold no other way but by the covenant; taking hold of the covenant, and taking hold of him, whom that covenant doth (as it were) enwrap and give us the hold of; they are equivalent expressions, and mean one and the same thing. But then understand under what notion is he to be taken hold of; you see that text speaks the matter plainly; he is to be taken hold of, under the notion of the hope set before them. And so when the soul comes into such an union with him, as to have his entrance into it, so as that he is said to be in the soul, to be, by an internal presence, actually indwelling in it: under what notion is that? Why, that scripture tells us, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you." How is he in us, under what notion is he in us? As the hope of glory, he makes his way into the soul, under the notion of the soul's hope. The soul receives him, admits him, unites with him under that notion, as its great hope; Christ who is our hope, as that mentioned introductive passage of the Epistle to Timothy speaks.

And here I must note to you, that speaking of the influence of hope, upon this great transaction of the soul with Christ, I speak not of the hope which doth follow the receptive act, or the self-resigning act, but of an hope that doth precede it. It is true, there is an hope which follows it, by which every believing soul is to continue hoping to the end; often repeating that act, through its whole after course. But there is an hope that doth precede it, of which I now speak, that is, that leads to this reception of Christ, and self-resignation to him; and under the influence whereof, the soul doth receive Christ, and resign itself, and which therefore must be understood to precede: and that is only the immediate product of the gospel representation that is made of Christ; he is discovered to us in the gospel in those capacities, and under those notions, in which he is to be received. This representation of him, so believed on, I believe (saith the soul) this is true, which the gospel speaks concerning Christ, I assent to the truth of this word.

Hence ariseth this hope in the soul, which intervenes between the assenting act of faith, and the relative act of faith; the soul having thus assented to the truth of the gospel revelation, it hereupon hopes, surely I shall run no desperate hazard if I do receive Christ, and resign myself to him according as the gospel doth direct; and so by the influence of this hope accordingly doth receive, and doth resign.

And so the matter being so far stated before us, which we are to clear to you; I shall first argue it out by some more general considerations very briefly, and shall in some particular heads that do concur in this transaction with Christ, discover to you the influence of this hope to this purpose, the bringing about such an agreement and closure of the soul with Christ.

1. It may be argued out to you, from such general considerations as these.

(1.) That the soul's contracting, or coming to such an agreement with Christ, is most certainly a very wise act, the wisest thing that ever any soul did for itself in all this world. As certainly they cannot but be great fools, who, when the gospel reveals a Saviour, will perish by neglect of him; will rather perish than receive him, when they have the Saviour in view, and the terms in view upon which he is to be received.

(2.) Wisdom in any such action is to be estimated by the reference thereof to the end, which is to be designed therein. There is no wise action, but is designed for some end or other, as aptly serving and contributing to the attaining of that end. That is a succedaneous consideration, which is plain in itself. And then add,

(3.) That the proper end, which in such a reception of a Saviour must be designed, is salvation. Nothing can be plainer, than that the end, I am to design in receiving a Saviour is, that I may be saved by him. What else can it be? To which I subjoin,

(4.) That there can be no design without hope. It is naturally impossible to me to design my own salvation by receiving of a Saviour, but it must be with hope of success in this way. There can be, in all the world, no such thing as a design laid without hope of compassing it; no end proposed without hope and expectation, that at last it may be brought about. It is not needful that there should be a certainty that it shall, but there must be an hopefulness and probability that it may, otherwise there can be no

design at all. It is not agreeable to the human nature to design for that, of which there is no hope. These are general considerations, which do plainly enough evince, that this transaction of the soul with Christ, in order to its own salvation, must be under the influence of hope. But,

2. I shall go on to shew, from several particulars, which lie within the compass of this great work of transacting and agreeing with Christ, according to the terms of the gospel covenant; upon each of which, it cannot be, but hope must have influence. As,

(1.) In such a transaction with Christ, or when the soul is coming to an agreement with him upon gospel terms, it must renounce any other saviour or way of salvation, that either is co-ordinate with him, or much more, that shall be opposite to him; whatsoever indeed shall be subordinate, must be taken in, but to think of any thing co-ordinate, of any such thing, there must be a most absolute renunciation. The soul must speak its own sense in such words as the church speaks here; "Asher shall not save us, nor will we say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods; for with thee the fatherless find mercy." There must be an exclusion of all things else, that shall be co-ordinately joined with Christ, or that shall be brought into any kind of competition with him, in this his saving work, and offer. I abandon all other saviours, (this is the language of the soul,) and all expectations from any other.

Now, whereas it is manifest the soul must be brought to this, if ever it come to a closure and agreement with Christ, so it can never be brought to this, but by the influence of of hope concerning him. A drowning man will never let go his twig, but in order to a surer hold of something that may be stronger, and that he may better trust to it. If men have nothing else to rely upon, but their own imagined innocency, or their righteousness, or their performances, that they have performed such and such things in a way of duty, or withheld themselves, and abstained from such and such things in a way of sin. If men have nothing else to rely upon here, they will hold till they have a better hold. It must be the influence of a better hope, some better hope introduced, that must make the soul willing to let go this hold: they will never quit the twig, till they have in view somewhat better and stronger to take hold of. There must be this, in the first place, in the soul's transacting with Christ, a renouncing of any other Saviour, or any other way of salvation.

(2.) There must be the taking on of Christ's yoke; in this transaction with him, the soul must agree to take his yoke upon it, submit its neck thereunto. The gospel is plain and express in this, even in those words of grace themselves, than which the gospel did never breathe sweeter and more grateful ones; "Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; learn of me, and take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But such as it is, take it you must; or you are never to expect rest from me, safety, or relief from me. If I give, you must take. If I give you pardon, if I give you peace, you must take my yoke, my burden upon your necks and shoulders: in short, the soul must submit to be governed by Christ, subject itself to his governing power, and the sceptre of his kingdom. This must be its fence. "Other lords have had dominion over me, but now I will make mention of thy name, of thine only." It must be subject to the government of Christ, both negative and positive; that is, must submit, and be bound up from every way of sin, and it must submit and yield to be bound to every way of duty: and this is taking up of Christ's yoke, and this it can never do but with hope, but under the influence of hope.

It is upon the declining of this, that many a soul comes to break with Christ after a treaty begun, and (it may be) carried on far: they may be content to entertain those pleasant thoughts which the gospel gives some intimation of, and by its first overtures doth (as it were) suggest and offer to the soul, of having sin pardoned, and God reconciled, and being saved from the wrath to come, and of being intitled to future felicity, and a blessed state. These are pleasant thoughts, and the first aspect of the gospel doth suggest them; and while the soul looks upon these alone, and doth not look upon what there is of conjunct duty with it, it may go on far, and there may seem to be an agreement entered, or very near to be entered, or which the soul is in a great disposition to enter into with Christ, while it is only expecting much from him, and thinks of bending itself in nothing to him. But when that part comes to be reflected on too, then the soul begins to recoil, to revolt, and to fly off. It can be content with every thing but to be yoked, to come under restraints from such and such ways; no, (saith the soul,) I will never endure to be yoked, to come under obligation to such and such

things as have displeased me, and I could never yet like. Yes, but this Christ insists on. If ever you expect rest from me, I expect you will take on my yoke; that you willingly submit to be yoked by me; it is indeed an easy yoke, and I would have thee understand the matter so, and thou wilt find it an easy yoke, when once thou hast tried it; but a yoke it is, and as such it must be received. But here is the great matter of hesitation, the wretched soul sticks at this, No, I will not endure thy yoke! It is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as Ephraim is represented, Jer. xxxi. 18. and if ever they come to be made sensible, they will speak that sense truly, "I was like Ephraim, thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This is their sense, if ever they become truly and thoroughly sensible; but in the mean time, here is the stick, because they have not been accustomed to the yoke, and cannot endure to be yoked, therefore doth many an one part with Christ, and give up all; all treaty is quite broken off between Christ and them. And if it be, pray what is the reason of it, thou wretched soul? If one may speak thy own sense in the case, if thou wouldest but reflect and see, whether it be not so, this will prove to be it, to wit, thou hadst no hope. I believe I may speak the heart of many an one in this case, if they could but tell how to speak their own, and to observe so much of their own heart.

I would have such to consider it, as are yet in their youthful days, whether sometimes, having been struck with convictions, and having taken up thoughts of providing for their own safely, and eternal well-being, they have not thereupon come to some kind of deliberation: The gospel is plain, here I have the Redeemer fully represented to me in it. And then this hath been your sense, Lord, I begin to take up thoughts of coming to an agreement with thee upon the terms proposed to me in thy gospel. It may be, the soul hath seemed to itself willing to submit to them, rather than perish; but afterwards, through want of watchfulness, or too much self-confidence, or too little dependance upon the grace of God, a temptation hath proved victorious in some or other particular instances, and here hath been a relapse into somewhat (it may be) of a gross sin; I inquire of such, whether this be not the truth of the case, whether hereupon their souls have not grown hopeless? Well, I shall never overcome; here are my corruptions that are

too hard for me, and I shall never prevail! It may be, thoughts have been resumed, and trials have been renewed again and again, and returning temptations have prevailed, and got the upper hand. Well, saith the soul, I shall never do any good at it, I shall never make any thing of it: and thereupon all hath been given up, and the reins have been laid freely on the neck of lusts, and that resolution hath been taken, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" and why it was taken, so that text tells us, Jer. ii. 29. Thou hast said, there is no hope; and what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."

So very contiguous and bordering, are despair and presumption upon one another, when the soul absolutely despairs, then it most highly presumes. There is no hope; well, what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" I will let corruption and sensual inclinations have their swing, I will obey the lusts of it, for there is no hope. And then, how lamentable a thing is it, that a soul should be lost so; for if there be no hope in the case, there will be no repetition of endeavours, no further strugglings, no further contests: and then, all is lost, all is gone, which is the forlorn case of those (as I have had occasion at large to shew) who had in some measure escaped the corruptions of this world through lust, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and are again entangled therein and overcome; their latter end with them is worse than the beginning. And whence is this? Because they have been entangled and overcome, therefore they throw away all hope. They should indeed, throw away all hope of being saved, while they are overcome, and remain so, and are slaves, vassals, and captives, to corrupt inclinations; they should throw away all hope of ever being saved in this state; but they should not throw away all hope of being saved out of it. They should throw away hope of being saved without overcoming; but they ought to entertain hope that they shall overcome; that yet they shall overcome, if yet they watch, and yet strive, and yet pray, and yet depend; and there is no other thing to be done. It is not to lie down and perish thus, and say there is nothing more to be done. That is another thing to be done in this coming to an agreement with Christ, upon which hope hath influence, namely, taking on his yoke. And,

(3.) Taking up his cross, that must be done too; and you can never come to a closure with Christ, to an agreement with him upon other terms; you cannot without it be a

disciple, Luke xiv. 20. that is, cannot be a Christian; he only makes feint offers at being a Christian, but is none till he comes to this, to take up the cross, that is, willingly to submit to these terms, that it shall be laid upon him whenever Christ pleaseth, whenever his word and providence together so state the case, that either I must embrace sin or the cross.

And as it is plain, that thus it must be whensoever the soul transacts with Christ, so it is most highly reasonable that thus it should be. Do not murmur at it, do not think it hard that you are to go (if Christ will have it so) a suffering Christian to heaven and glory; for pray, did he not bear a worse cross for you? and do not you expect to be saved from worse things by him? Did not the death that he suffered upon the cross import unspeakably more of grievance and of horror, than any thing you are capable of suffering in this world? And as to what you are capable of suffering for him, and upon his account, is it at all comparable to the sufferings you expect to be delivered from by him? Is it not reasonable then, that a state of most absolute devoting to him all your external comforts, and your very life itself, (if it should be called for,) should come in, and be made part of those terms, upon which Christ will conclude with you, that you shall be his, and he will be yours? Never mutter at it, the reason of the thing speaks itself, that you in coming to him say, Lord, I am come to make a most absolute contract with thee; take me, my life, my estate, my concernments, all that is dear to me in this world, I am willing should become a sacrifice to thee; do with me, and what belongs to me, as thou wilt, only save my soul; it is for eternal life I am come to thee, and for no temporal immunities or enjoyments.

(4.) Another thing considerable in this contract and agreement with Christ, and which is the essential thing, is the vital union that the soul must enter into with him. If ever you come to an agreement with Christ, you must be vitally united. There must be that union of life between him and you, as whereupon spirit may be said to touch spirit, and life, life; as in that 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

Oh! that this might be understood, and enter into all our hearts! I am much aware of it, how easy a thing (in comparison) an external and outside Christianity is, and how apt men are to take up with that. A religion, a Christianity, that consists but in externals, or any thing of that kind,

is incomparably easier than this venturing, or adjoining of ourselves with Christ. The affrighted soul when once it is awakened in any measure, and apprehensive of the danger of its case, it readily submits to any thing but this, which is a thing partly not understood, and partly irksome and grievous to flesh and blood: it recoils at the very thought of it. Any thing is easy in comparison of this: any thing that shall only be an exercise to the outward man, or (as I may say) to the surface of the inner, to wit, the soul when it is under an affright, then it may yield: I will comply with any external abstinences, I will submit to any external performances, I will abstain from what you will have me, I will perform what you will have me, as to the outward man, only let me be excused from such efforts of the inner man, as I partly do not understand, and partly as I do understand them, I cannot but regret, and have an aversion to them.

Here it is that many an one breaks with Christ, because they will not endure those paroxysms, which they must pass through in passing from death to life; in turning the very vertical point. It is being created in Christ, coming to a vital union with him, that is the great thing at which the heart startles and revolts. This was the very case we read of in that 6th chapter of John, when our Saviour had said and inculcated again and again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And he observes the tumultuations and mutinies of their minds at the spiritualities of his foregoing discourse: thereupon saith he, Do not murmur at this, for I tell you, that "No man can come to me, except the Father draws him." And in the sequel of that discourse, (verse 65th,) Did not I tell you before, "no man can come to me except it be given him of my Father?" They were willing to comply far in externals; you see they followed Christ from place to place, with mighty complacency attended upon his gospel, were pleased with his doctrine; when they miss him in one place they run to another part of the country, they take ship and follow him; when they understood he was gone to the other side of the sea of Tiberias they throng after him in great multitudes; they leave the affairs of their callings to go from place to place after him; but yet, when they heard this from him, many went back, and walked no more with him. This is the sense of many an one towards Christ; Lord, we will follow thee all the country over; we will go from place to place, wheresoever we may meet thee, or

hear any thing of thee. And these persons, while they did thus much externally, did also abstain from much, you may be sure, where they could have no opportunity of indulging and gratifying their appetites; being thus hurried from place to place, pursuing and following Christ; yet they did it. So it may be with many an one besides, in our days, when they are awakened, and in some terror, there are no external abstinences that we think or know will offend; we will no more be drunk with the drunken, nor scorn with the scorners; no, by no means; we will undergo any restraint and severities in this kind, rather than run the hazard of our souls; and we will stick at no external performances; nothing that hath but bodily exercise in it. We care not how many sermons we go to hear; we will go any where to the church, or to the meeting-place, where we may hear the most serious ministers; we will be sure always to stick close to the honest side, and to the best cause; we will be true to the last, to the protestant religion and government, and to that party that adhere thereto. All this is fairly and well overtured; but tell them, that besides all this you must have a work wrought in your heart and soul, which is to be done by a divine power. By a divine power, say ye? Then where are we? Can we command the divine power? This is the foolish cheat and deceit that many put upon themselves; and they make the matter to be hopeless from such expressions; "No man can come to me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him," and "except it be given him of my Father." Here are true and just premises, from whence many times men allow themselves to infer the falseth conclusion imaginable. That, therefore, they have nothing to do, and therefore they have nothing of hope remaining to them; considering that which is only in the power of another, not in their own. But upon serious and sober thoughts;—is it not all one, whether you have that power of your own, or may have it from another, if it be duly sought in the prescribed way that plainly lies in view before us all? Doth not the same gospel, the same word that saith, "no man can come to me except the Father that hath sent me draw him," or "except it be given him of my Father," say also, that he "will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him," as readily as parents will give bread to their children rather than a stone?

This doth not difference the case; it is only a reservation that the great God doth think fit to keep to himself, as

suitable to the majesty of a God in the way of his dispensations towards perishing creatures, offending creatures. Mercy you shall have; help you shall have; power you shall have to do what is necessary to be done in order to your being made safe and happy. But you shall know you are to receive it; you are to seek it; you are to come upon the knee for it; you are to be in the dust for it; to wait, and be prostrate at the foot of a mercy-seat, and before a throne of grace. This is suitable to God, and it is suitable to you; to an offended Majesty, and to offending creatures; but it doth not infer that there is therefore no hope, because there is such a vital union to be brought about with Christ, as can only be brought about by a divine power; for there is still hope that you may have that power afforded you, and exerted in you, both from the gracious nature of God, to which it can never agree to let a soul perish that is aiming at a compliance with him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. And there is encouragement from most express words of scripture, that carry such sweet alluring breathings of grace in them; "Turn ye at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you." Prov. i. 28. And do you think these words signify nothing? "As I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Turn, and live." There must be offers of turning, aims to turn, aimings to come to his closure, reachings forth of the soul towards Christ, to come to a living union with him; and in that way you are to expect help.

Objection 1. But it may be said, what hope yet can there be, when, upon the whole matter (as we have lately been taught) there are very few that are saved, and when it is so apparent that the generality do perish, do walk on in destructive ways,—ways that take hold of hell, and lead down to the chamber of death? What hope is there for us, that we that are here in this assembly, when there are so few that are saved; what hope (I say) can there be given to us, that we shall be of those few?

Answer. To this let me say but thus much at present; that, as few as they are, who have you heard of concerning whom you have ground to think, to admit a thought, that they did perish, or were in likelihood to perish, taking the course that hath been directed? That is, having the terms of the gospel in view before them, and aiming and striving to their uttermost, and accompanying their endeavours

with earnest supplication to the God of all grace, for help to comply with those terms, and come up to them? As few as they are that are saved, they are certainly much fewer that ever perished this way, if ever you can suppose that any one perished that doth thus. If there are few that shall be saved, do but consider how much fewer a number you have here to oppose of such as perish in such a way, and upon such terms: incomparably fewer, if ever it can be thought that any at all have thus perished. And no more needs to be said to this now.

Objection 2. But it may perhaps be said,—it seems, however, a very mean thing, that the soul, in coming to a closure with Christ, should be influenced hereunto only by the hope of being saved; I come to him, because I hope I shall be saved by him; I have terrible destruction in view, and I find myself beset with dangers and deaths, and I have no other way to escape; but the hope of escaping brings me to Christ. This (it may be said) is mean.

Answer. Mean, say ye? And to whom is it mean? Is it mean to you, or is it mean to Christ? It is very true indeed, to you it is mean, and it is fit it should be so; for a company of offending creatures, must they stick at any thing that may be mean to them in order to their being saved? Why, man, it is in order to thy being saved from eternal death and destruction; and wilt thou grudge at any thing, because it is mean, that tends and is necessary to the saving thee? No; it is fit for us to put our mouths in the dust, (as was said,) "if there may be any hope." They that have forfeited their lives, and deserved a thousand hells, is it for them to stick at any thing because it is mean? But when to you it is mean, to Christ it is not mean; that he should be the hope of sinners, to him it is honourable; to him it is glorious. And by how much the more it is debasing to you, it is so much the more exalting to him, magnifying of him in his office, and magnifying of him in the great and high excellencies of his nature and person.

SERMON XVII.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

But now there doth somewhat need to be considered in reference to all that hath been opened, which may, by way of objection, occur and offer itself to the thoughts of many. As,

Objection 1. This may be objected; that it seems not so intelligible how hope should have influence upon conversion; for, can there be any thing good in the soul before conversion? And inasmuch as by conversion itself the first grace is given, can there be any grace before this first? Why, there are several things that may be said to this, which it will be of very great use to us to consider; and which (this being a fit way of introducing them) I choose to introduce this way. As,

Answer 1. That there is always a difficulty in fixing the beginnings of things. The very *transitus* of any thing from its *non esse* to its *primum esse;* from its state of nothingness to its beginning to be, is always a matter of real difficulty, and which cannot but carry somewhat of obscurity and dubiousness along with it. But,

Answer 2. It was upon the foresight of what I tell you now is liable to be objected, that I told you formerly of a twofold hope, which we are to consider in reference to the present case; to wit, of an human and rational hope, and of an holy and gracious hope. The former whereof is leading, and introduced to the latter; and, indeed, to be presupposed to it as a foundation, according as the human rational nature is unto the holy gracious nature; every one must be an human creature before he can be an holy creature; the being of the man precedes the being of the saint, or holy man. So it is in this case too; the very being of an human rational hope must precede that of the gracious and holy hope; and as such, it is not without the influence that hath been mentioned to the mentioned purposes. If any yet cannot hope as a saint, they ought according to the

* Preached, June 14, 1691.

grounds they have in view before them, to hope as a man. If you cannot yet hope as an holy creature, you ought to hope as a reasonable creature, according to those grounds that God hath laid in view before you. And,

Answer 3. To hope as an human and reasonable creature is to hope, upon the consideration of such things as have that tendency in themselves to found and raise an hope in us; that is plain and obvious in itself; for consideration is nothing else but the exercise of our reasoning faculty; a communing with ourselves; a discussing matters with our own souls, or in our own minds, according to the concernment that we may apprehend them to be to us. And in that way, (if there be a real ground,) hope ought to be excited and raised up in us. And we ought to be active, in order to its being so. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope; (Lam. iii. 21.) recollecting and calling to mind such things as are proper matter of hope, ought to excite and raise such hope in us. And again,

Answer 4. This God himself doth point out to us as the proper method of conversion; to wit, the engaging and setting on work our own considering power, which, being duly engaged, hath a tendency that hath been noted to raise hope. It is marked out as the great bar and obstruction to conversion, when people will not consider: "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider." Isaiah, i. 3, 4. "Ah, foolish people! a sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil doers; children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord." Isaiah, i. 16. And afterwards, he reasons with them to turn; "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;" as you find throughout the series of that chapter. He calls upon his apostate people, (when they have revolted and gone back from him, and when therefore the exigency of the case makes their conversion and return necessary,) he calls upon to shew themselves men; "remember this, and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, (oh,) ye transgressors!" Isaiah, xlvi. 8. And for that very reason, he discovers himself ready to shew mercy: when he hath at any time the opportunity given him of observing such a temper and disposition of spirit to consider and return. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Ezek. xviii. 27, 28. "Because he considereth, and turneth

away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." "Because he considers and turns;" if he do not consider, hewill never turn. If he do consider, he may, especially, when he doth consider such things as tend (as was said) to found and raise an hope for him of mercy in returning. Again,

Answer 5. Such things as ought to be considered in such a case, they do more clearly and distinctly present themselves to view with them that live under the gospel. That gives mighty advantages to such considerations as carry matter of hope with them: and God will deal with all sorts of people according to that measure of light which he affords them. For those that live under the gospel, they must be dealt withal according to what discovery is extant before them of his mind and will by that; for those that have no gospel, they will be dealt with by other measures. But, for those that live under the gospel, to whom that bright, and morning, and pleasant light hath shined, they ought to judge, and make, and estimate of their own state and case accordingly; and think I am not a creature turned loose into the world to wander in it as in a wilderness; but I am by special, peculiar, divine favour placed under the dispensation of an everlasting gospel, in which he speaks his mind distinctly to men about the ways and methods of recovering and saving lost and perishing souls; so that whatsoever hath a tendency to adminster any matter of hope, it lies in view with the greatest advantage imaginable, before whom this divine and express revelation of the mind of God about these concernments is come. And,

Answer 6. That hope that shall (upon consideration of the things that have that tendency) arise in the souls of any in order to their conversion, and before that work be as yet done, we must understand it to be greatly improved and assisted by those greater measures of common grace, that are afforded to them that live under the dispensation of the gospel. And so, I told you at first, that human rational hope, assisted by common grace, may have a great and very significant influence towards this blessed change that is to be wrought upon the soul. And though it be very true, therefore, that there can be no special grace before the first special grace, (as the matter speaks itself,) yet there may be common grace before special grace. That grace that goes under the name of common, it is leading, it is preparatory, it is antecedent to that which goes under the notion of special. And so the doubt is answered, what

grace can there be before the first grace? Before the first grace, there may be other grace,—grace that is not special grace; that is common, and that is in a greater measure afforded to them that live under the gospel. And thereupon I add,

Answer 7. That there are sundry obvious considerations that tend to raise hope, which, as common grace falls in with it, (though it be but merely human and rational hope otherwise,) may have a mighty hand in the soul's first turn to God, or an influence upon it; considerations that tend partly to awaken in the soul a sense of its own case; and that tend thereupon to erect and lift it up towards God in hope. I do not confine the discourse I am upon, nor would I confine your thoughts to such considerations merely, abstractedly, and singly, as tend to beget hope; but such as tend to beget a sense first, and then to beget hope; that is, when the soul is made to feel its own distress, and perceive sensibly its own forlorn wretchedness; this makes it the more susceptible of that hope that must have influence upon this great turn to God through Christ. And those will be such considerations, as they who live under the gospel have their present and constant advantage for. It is for one to sit down with himself, and think; and we may be sure the gospel will never do that soul any good that never thinks, that never considers. But if one under the dispensation of the gospel will set himself to consider, he hath such considerations as these obvious to him:—

"I am an apostate creature; a poor wretch fallen from God, cut off from him by mine own iniquity, who hath been the Author of my life and being to me, and from whom alone I can expect a blessed eternity. I have by apostasy incurred his displeasure, fallen short of his glory, fallen under his wrath; I am, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others are; I know there is a satisfaction due to divine justice from me, for the injury and wrong I have done to the majesty and authority of his government over me, who gave me breath; I know I am never capable of making that satisfaction myself; if I were to lie everlastingly in consuming flames I should be always satisfying, but I should never have satisfied. But I find with all (and the gospel tells me so) God doth not expect from me that I should satisfy for my own sin; he hath devolved that matter wholly into another hand; and the gospel having declared to me his mind and pleasure herein, it would be the

greatest presumption imaginable in me to offer at being a satisfier for my own sin; to offer at that were to offer an affront instead of a satisfaction; to suppose I could satisfy, were for me to measure arms with the Almighty; it were to take upon me as if I were a God,—as if I were the man his fellow; as if any thing that could be done or suffered by me could bear proportion to the rights and dignities of the divine government, when they have been invaded, usurped, and violated, as they have been by me. But I find by the same gospel, that though I am not required to make satisfaction to the justice of God for my own sin mysel, yet I am required to return to God, and to receive his Son, who hath made that satisfaction; and to receive him with a dependant and subject heart, casting myself upon him for salvation, and subjecting myself for government, even unto eternal life. I find this is required; every one that lives under the gospel may consider so, and ought to consider so. This light shines into every one's face that lives under the gospel.

"And then hath every one of us to consider further,—but for this mighty turn I find for myself no power; I ought to turn to God through Christ, but I cannot; not through natural impotency, but moral; for this can be resolved only into disinclination of will. My will is disinclined, bent another way; I must tear myself off from those ways of sin that I have run in; I cannot alter the bent of my own heart, no more than a leopard can his spots, or a blackmoor his skin. Here is the great stress and hinge of this case. That must be done, or I am lost, which I myself cannot do. But such an one hath yet further to consider: I find it is charged upon me to return, to come back to God through Christ; to repent towards God, to believe in his Son. I find these things are charged upon me; and my reason and conscience cannot but tell me, that that impotency which only lies in a disaffected disinclined will, can never excuse me from such duty. That is the very sum of all malignity itself; a will against my duty; a will against the good and acceptable will of God; this carries all the malignity of hell in it, to have such a will. Therefore this ill habit and bent of my will can by no means in the world invalidate the obligation of those laws and precepts, that bind me to repentance and faith in the Son of God; they lie upon me as a matter of indispensable duty still. That such an one hath to consider and think that,

Then nothing can be more obvious than to consider further,—

" If I have such things lying upon me as matter of most apparent and indispensable duty, for which I have no present power, nothing remains to me but to offer at my duty; otherwise I lay myself under the manifest guilt of most insolent rebellion: for I cannot but say, that a sinner is righteously enjoined to repent. If it were great iniquity in me first to offend, it is most apparent duty to repent of my having offended; and if God offer to me his own Son to be to me a Saviour and a Ruler both together, surely it is most justly enjoined upon me that I receive him as such, that I rely upon him as a Saviour, and subject myself to him as a Ruler. I have nothing to say against the equity, reasonableness, and obligingness of these laws of his. Why, then, if they do lay actual obligation upon me, and I feel no present power in my own soul to comply with them; but cannot but be sensible of impotency, to wit, a disinclined heart. What? I offer at turning to God? I may as well offer at removing a mountain. Here is a difficulty invincible to me; a power that I can by no means overcome; a carnal, corrupt inclination, carrying me another way, and that strengthened by all the infernal powers of hell and darkness too; for every one that is turned is " turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts, xxvi. 18. And who hath " delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Coloss. i. 13. A mighty turn this is! And when the law saith to me, Repent; when it saith, Turn, believe, receive Christ; subject thyself to him; rely upon him. If I look into myself I find myself dead; " You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" Eph. ii. 1, 2. where all have naturally their conversations, " according to the course of the world, and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." What shall I do in this case against all the power of my own indwelling corruption, and all combined powers of the hellish infernal kingdom, that labour to the uttermost to keep me off from God, to keep me off from Christ, that I may never come to a closure? What is to be done in this case? Why, the mentioned considerations are most obvious; to wit, those great evangelical precepts requiring nothing but matter of most plain and indispensable duty, from which a disinclined will is no excuse, but rather the highest aggravation imaginable of my iniquity

and guilt, if I comply not; so as that I am held under a strict tie to do what the evangelical law requires and charges upon me. Nothing is (I say) plainer, and more distinctly in view, than that I am to offer at what I cannot myself effect; otherwise I add insolent rebellion to all my former indisposition. And I find this is the plain meaning of the commands, as they are explicated by superadded promises. "Turn ye at my reproof." Prov. i. 23. What, I alone? What, I by myself?—No; do you turn; do as much as in you is; put yourselves into a turning posture; and "I will pour out my Spirit upon you; and I will make known my words unto you."

And to excite and raise hope higher in this case, the poor wretch hath to consider this:

"It is the God of all grace that I am now to apply myself to; the God that is rich in mercy, and that is the Father of mercies: and again, I am to apply myself to him for the concernments of my soul; of an immortal spirit, that he hath put into me, who is himself the Father of Spirits. Why should I not expect he should be kind to his own offspring?—a poor wandering soul; a degenerate, apostate spirit, that is sensible of having apostatized, that is now aiming to return and to come back to him? Why should not I expect him to be merciful, to be helpful to a poor soul that sees itself lost if he do not help,—if he do not put forth his hand and draw me into union with him, and with his Son, in whom he knows only I must live, and without which union I am left still under a necessity of perishing? And here is this to be considered,—he is more nearly related to this spirit of mine than to my flesh, more nearly to this soul of mine than to my outward man. I have found him kind and compassionate to my flesh and outward man. This is fit to be suggested to any man's soul that begins to awaken and consider his case; and, further, to say within himself, Thou hast nothing to do but to hope in the divine mercy; and thou hast already found the Father of mercies merciful to thy meaner and baser part. How hast thou lived all this while in this world? It was by him that thou didst live, and through him thou wast born; and thou hast hung upon him ever since thou hangedst upon thy mother's breast. Where hast thou had thy bread for a day, and day by day, but from him? Where hast thou had thy breath every moment? thy breath was continually in his hand. He that hath been so compassionate to that flesh of thine without thy seeking, will he

not be compassionate to thy soul, if thou dost seek him,—if thou dost crave,—if thou dost cry, and tell him, Here is one of the souls that thou hast made, ready to perish under the tyranny of a carnal inclination, and under the power of the great destroyer of souls? Is there no place for hope in this case? though the case be a distressed case, it plainly speaks itself not to be a desperate case; will not he, who is the God of all grace, shew compassion to a soul that is aiming to come back to him upon his call, and when he calleth him, though he can come but faintly, struggle but weakly; though he can but aim to come?"

And, again, you have this to consider to found and raise hope; that you do him the highest homage that in your case and circumstances you are capable of doing, when you throw yourselves upon his mercy; and it is that which he is most highly pleased with. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy;" a scripture, that any soul which begins to have an awakened sense of the state of his own case, ought to have as a frontlet before his eyes, and engraven (as it were) upon the palms of his hands. This ought to be considered; Though I cannot comply with him as I should, I cannot do such things as are just and righteous, (which a most unexceptionable, evangelical law, doth ask for, and require, and challenge,) yet I am willing to do him all the homage I am capable of, by casting myself upon his mercy, and by making him my ultimate and last hope. Say you so? (saith God,) Is this your posture? Now you please me beyond all things that you were capable of doing besides, or any other way. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy." This is to acknowledge the divine mercy to be a bottomless abyss, never to be fathomed; you hope in his mercy, when otherwise you had no hope in any thing else. This is that wherein he takes pleasure; this is to acknowledge him to be God, to give him the proper glory of his Deity; and own him to be infinite and immense even in goodness, that great excellency and perfection of his nature.

And admit that all considerations, all the actual thoughts you have of all these things, and your revolving them to and fro in your own minds, are all, as yet, but within the compass, enabling you to raise an hope upon so plain grounds as these are, which lie in view before you; yet every one sees that these things have a manifest tendency to the soul's turning to God through Christ; and so lie in

your way to that special grace, wherein the great turn itself doth lie. And then I add again, in the last place, that,

Answer 8. That, whenever that great turn is brought about wherein is the great effort of grace, which is most special and peculiar, it is manifest that an holy hope is one of the things that doth first appear and shew forth itself in this great turn. For the soul is to close with God in Christ; but this is impossible to it, but as it hopes for acceptance. This can never be the act of a despairing soul. If the soul look upon God and Christ with absolute despair, it is hardened with a diabolical hatred; and can never close, can never unite with him but when it opens itself to receive Christ, and all the fulness of God. It is hope that opens it, and hath the great influence into the sincere covenanting act, the vital covenanting act, by which the soul takes God in Christ, and surrenders and gives up itself to God, through Christ. And that is sincere and so continues, or doth not continue, according as the soul hopes or hopes not, or hopes truly and fully, or otherwise.

The expressions to this purpose are worthy to be written in letters of gold, which we find in Psalm lxxviii. 7, 8. Where we have the very root of sincerity, and the very root of apostacy pointed out to us both together, even with manifest reference to the truth of the thing I am now inculcating to you: "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright: and whose spirit was not stedfast with God." The design of all this is to signify, that God would have a people to succeed from that root and stock that should be better than their fathers; but wherein should they be better? or should they come to be better? Why, their fathers were stubborn and rebellious; they were false and unsteadfast in the covenant of God; they did covenant, but it was on terms: "They did but flatter him with their mouths, (as is afterwards expressed,) and lied to him with their tongues." Their hearts were not sincere; there was no fixedness and stability in the covenant of God. And wherein should their children be better? Why, I will have them be taught and instructed, and to learn, from all the methods of the dispensations of God towards their forefathers, to set their hope in God. This was the great thing their fathers did not; and therefore continued rebels still; and when they seemed to covenant were false and treacherous, and un-

stedfast in their covenant with God. But if ever there come to be sincere covenanting, it must come from their setting of their hope in God as the "God of all grace;" as the God "rich in mercy;" to whom, as such, (each must say,) "I do, through his Christ, adjoin my soul, and tell him, Here I will live; here I will die; I am come to this point, brought to thee by the invitation of thine own word and gospel. It hath bid me repent and believe, and required me to yield myself to God, and to take God for mine. I do all this upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, the authority of the law of grace, that supreme, that benign law." This is that which makes the soul stedfast; brings it to a point; now it finds this is a work that will hold, when the soul is setting its hope in God, and unites itself by covenant with him.

And so much with reference to that first objection, which served me to introduce these sundry things, which I hope will be of use to those that consider them.

Objection 2. But, in the second place, it may be further objected: If hope,—the hope of being saved, will have such an influence upon conversion in order thereunto, how comes it to pass, that when the most do so generally profess an hope of being saved, yet so few are converted hereby? Is hope like to have such an influence upon conversion in order to salvation, when we find that men do very generally hope to be saved, and have very great hope of being saved; yet many of them (the greater part of them it may be) are never converted?

Answer. To that there are some things to be said, also, that it may be of equal use to us, to understand and consider. As,

1. Therefore it is, that many hope to be saved who are never converted by their hope, because they do maim the object of their hope; that is, whereas they should hope first to be converted, and then, secondly, so to be saved, they hope to be saved without being converted. And so one great part of the object of their hope is left out; and their hope, therefore, is not only not subservient, but is obstructive to their conversion; and so, consequently, to their salvation too. It doth (I say) not only subserve it, but hinders it. They hope they shall be saved,—that they make the abstract and separate object of their hope, excluding and shutting out from that salvation all considerations of the sanctity, the purity, the holiness, which the conversion, that they should conjoin therewith, carries in

it. And this doth not only not help, but hinders both their conversion and salvation. It doth not help it, because the hope of being saved without it is never likely to make them look after being converted. And it hinders it, because it cannot but provoke God to keep at a distance from them, and move his displeasure to the highest against them; for they do in this kind of hope, not only not hope according to his word, but they hope against it, so as that their very hope is the giving him and his word the lie; the worst and most provoking thing that can be thought. Their very hope is saying to themselves, "Peace, peace," though they walk after the imaginations of their own hearts; though they never alter their course, and though their hearts be never changed, yet they shall have peace. This (I say) is to give the lie to the divine truth, and the word of his truth; and so carries in it matter of the highest provocation; as that scripture expresseth it, "If any man think" and speak, though it be but in his own heart, though he do but mutter it inwardly, though he do but whisper it to himself, "I shall have peace though I walk in the way of my own heart, and after the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" to add the act of sin to the desire of sinning. Deut. xxix. 18, 19. My jealousy shall smoke against that man, (though he doth not speak out, though he doth but say it in heart,) for he doth me the greatest injury in his heart imaginable; his conceptions of me are ignominious; he makes me an impure deity, that will give peace to him that walketh on in his wicked ways; so that I should not only be reconciled to him in his wicked way, but I am supposed to be reconcileable to his wickedness,—to that wicked way in which he walketh. I am supposed untrue to myself; he makes me a foolish deity, that all the threats and menaces that are in my word against daring, insolent sinners, are only indeed *terrica lamenta*, bug-bears, to frighten children and fools with; therefore (saith he) my jealousy shall smoke against that man; I will not spare him, I mean to paradigmatize such a man as this, and to let all the world know, by the severity of my vengeance against such an one, that I am what he did not think me to be, a true, a holy, a just, and jealous God. That hope that men have of being saved without ever being converted, or turned to God through Christ, and breaking off from the way of sin, it is of this import, as you have heard. It carries this secret aspect and language in it, so detracting, so reproaching and ignominious to the true, and holy, and

jealous God. And therefore it is not to be thought strange, if men have such an hope as this, and it never doth them good. They will never be the better for it; it never makes them good men in this world, nor happy in the other. And then,

Answer 2. Besides this horrid maim and flaw, which is in the object of their hope, (separating therefrom what should be conjoined therewith,) there is an equally great defect in their very hope itself, which makes it not strange, that it should not have an influence into their conversion: for, if the matter should be examined, what are these men's hopes? It resolves into this; to wit, it is nothing else, but only no fear; it is a negative hope, and no positive thing; an hope that consists in nothing else, but only not fearing. They find they do not fear their being miserable, and that is all. It is very true, indeed, there is nothing that is more common language in the profanest mouths, than that form of asseveration, as they hope to be saved. But let the meaning of those very words be examined and inquired into, and it dwindles into nothing:—Hope to be saved? What do you mean by this hoping to be saved? Let the matter be but grasped, do but grasp at it, and you find this hope signifies nothing but only no fear. There is many an one with whom, in reference to many things there is neither fear nor hope; and it is so here: as from a country that is either merely imaginary, or that you know nothing of, you never hope for good, or fear any evil from thence. You are equally void of any hope, or of any fear, who doth either hope any good, or fear any evil from an Utopian land? This is the case with most of these confident persons, that will briskly say, upon all occasions, As I hoped to be saved, it is so and so. And what is this hope to be saved? It is only their no fear to be damned. It is true they have no fear of being damned; and this no fear they call hope, as if nothing must signify something. This is the plain state of the case; that hope that is to influence salvation, and, in order thereunto, conversion must be a real, active, vigorous principle in the soul; not a mere nullity, not a nonentity,—as no fear is,—never to fear is.

But you will say, Where lies the difference between these things? I answer, it is manifold and vast. As,

1. As to the positive hope that there should be, it is grounded in faith; but this (no fear) is grounded in infidelity; that is grounded in religion, this is grounded in atheism and irreligion. A vast difference! He that se-

riously hopes, hopes because he believes the word of God is true, and that such and such things have a real foundation there; and because he hath an inward reverence and adoration of God; and therefore, upon such and such discoveries of him as he is pleased to make of himself, and the impression on his heart suitably, there is a temperament in the soul towards him, made up of reverence and love, with some kind of dependence and trust. This is all founded in faith, and in religious sentiments; but this same [no fear] is founded in nothing but atheism and irreligion; they have no fear of that which they really believe is nothing, or they think will never be. And then again,

2. This [no fear] is nothing, whereas this hope that is required is a most positive thing, a principle of great liveliness, vigour, and activity, in its own sphere. That which is nothing can work nothing, effect nothing, in order to conversion or salvation. And again,

3. This [no fear] may signify nothing at all more than only the soul's unconcernedness for any such matter; whereas, real hope signifies its great concernedness, its deep intention of mind and thought about such things. There is nothing does more intend a man's thoughts towards any thing than real hope doth; but this [no fear] may signify his not minding any such concernments at all; his being totally unconcerned about them. So it may in many things, in which one apprehends himself to have no real interest one way or other, and so, accordingly, is in the temper of his mind indifferent in reference to such things. There are many such concernments of which we are totally ignorant, have no real knowledge or thought; the concernments of some remote countries, at the uttermost ends of the earth, which we know nothing of, understand nothing of their affairs; we are accordingly altogether unconcerned what is done there, and utterly without the exercise of hope or fear, as to the events of things among them. But it is not so with us in reference to the concernments that are under our notice. There is nobody so indifferent in reference to France, Germany, Flanders, and Savoy, as to the occurrences there, and in the conclave, and nearer home in Ireland. There is nobody that useth thought in those things that is so unconcerned about them, but that there will be various agitations of hope and fear this way; and that, according to the aspect of things among us, nobody can be supposed so indifferent among us, that there should be, in reference to these

things, neither hope nor fear. But every one, according to the wish and inclination of his own mind, hath his hope or his fear variously stirring in him thereunto. But it is possible there may be a total vacancy of fear where there is no concern at all. And as there is no fear, so there is no hope; that is, the things are never minded, never thought of.

And this is the true state of the case with the most in reference to the concernments of another world, as if it were a mere Utopia. They have, in reference thereunto, nothing of hope or of fear, but lie all their days in a stupid dream. And these are the persons, I confess, about whom I have the least hope, and the most fear; to wit, they who in reference to the concerns of their own souls, have neither hope nor fear; but lie in a drowsy sleep all their time, and dream away all their days; and whereas they talk of hoping to be saved, that hope is nothing else but only a not being afraid to perish, because they apprehend no danger, because they have nullified to themselves the great objects of hope and fear.

This, therefore, doth not signify the no influence of hope, but it signifies only the inefficacy, or no influence of no hope; for that hope is no hope which they miscall by that name. The most that they can make of it is, that it is no fear; but, as it is no fear, so it is no hope neither; that is, there is a vacancy equal both of hope and fear; and nothing makes their case more deplorable than this, that they are likely to perish even while there is hope, for want of hope. And this is the forlorn, dismal state of many that live under the gospel; they cannot hope without the intention of hope; there can be no rational or human hope, much less that hope that reaches to the pitch of common grace; without the intention of thought, their thoughts will not be engaged; and one day passeth with them after another, and not a serious thought taken up, Shall I be saved, or shall I perish? What will become of me when I die?

But I hope it is not generally so with you. It would be very sad if it were; when you hear so many Lord's days together, one after another, so much of salvation; one comes and preacheth to you upon that great question, "Are there few that shall be saved?" and another comes and preacheth to you upon that expostulatory passage, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" and a third, he comes and preacheth to you upon this assertion, "We are saved by hope:" nothing but being saved,

nothing but salvation, rings in your ears from one Lord's-day to another. And it will be an amazing thing, if, after all this, we have no concernment about being saved; so that we find no room, no place for the exercise of hope or fear; hope of being saved, or fear of perishing by not being saved.

But if the true import of the word salvation were understood, and received into our souls, it would make work among us; it would find us exercise either for hope or fear; when we have so much spoken of salvation as we find in scripture; and when the name of the Son of God is signalized to us, and celebrated among us as a Saviour, (he shall be called Jesus, for he shall be a Saviour to save his people from their sins,) why, every one that would but use his understanding, would say, What doth this word signify? What is the meaning of all this talk of salvation? of a Saviour, and of being saved; what doth it signify? It plainly signifies that all this world is likely to be shortly in a great flame, and that the Judge is at the door; that hell will shortly swallow up all a whole world of ungodly men, except that residue that shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord. And if we would but allow the word salvation its true import and significancy, it would be far from us to be without hope, in reference to being saved. And then we should come to understand somewhat of the significancy and of the influence of this hope, the hope of salvation, in order to our conversion first, and then to our salvation itself in the final state.

SERMON XVIII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING proposed to shew the influence that hope hath unto salvation, by shewing both what influence it hath upon conversion, that brings us into a state of salvation;

* Preached June 21, 1691.

and then what influence it hath upon the Christian's perseverance even to the end, by which we are continued in that state, and so finally saved. We have hitherto insisted upon the former, and are now to proceed to the latter; to speak to that influence which hope hath upon a Christian's perseverance in that holy course through which he is to pass on to the state of final glory and blessedness. And here it cannot but be obvious to you, from what hath been formerly said, that hope, as it refers to the perseverance of a Christian, must needs considerably differ from hope, as it hath at first influence into conversion; or a person's entrance into the Christian state, both in the nature and in the object; or in respect of the object of the one and of the other hope.

1. In respect of the nature of the one and the other, that hope that doth influence conversion, and is necessarily presupposed to it, (if you consider the nature of it,) hath no more in it than what doth belong to a merely human, rational hope, assisted only by common grace; for special grace cannot be supposed to be before conversion or regeneration; but even that human rational hope, it hath its influence and usefulness towards conversion, as other things belonging to the human nature have; not only our minds and understandings, by which we are capable of thinking and considering of things that are to affect, and by which we are to be wrought upon, in order to conversion. But even to go lower than that, our very external senses themselves; "faith cometh by hearing," and so it may come by reading the word and gospel, which is to be the means of conversion and salvation, to our souls. But if you look to the nature of that hope which is all along to influence the course of a converted person, one that is become sincerely a living Christian, that hope must needs be a part of the new man, or of the new nature, which is in regeneration communicated and imparted to the soul. And, accordingly,

2. The object of the one and the other hope must needs very much differ, even supposing the soul to be awakened, and that God is beginning to deal with it in order to conversion; it must be supposed to have some hope concerning the issue of this treaty, wherein it is now engaged with the great God about so important a matter. Otherwise (as hath been inculcated unto you again and again) it is impossible it should ever turn; converting and turning to God is not the act of a despairing, but of an hoping soul; and the dispositions thereunto do suppose some hope. And the

object of this hope must be understood to be God as now to be reconciled. The object of the other hope that doth influence a Christian's after course unto final salvation, is God hereafter to be enjoyed. God to be reconciled is the object of that hope, which a person hath while God is dealing with him in order to conversion; to wit, we must suppose him awakened; and being so, considers and bethinks himself, I am an offending, guilty creature; the God that made me hath just matter of controversy with me; will he be reconciled, or will he not? will he always hold me guilty, will he bear himself as an enemy and an avenger to a poor guilty creature as I am? or will he pardon? Will he forgive? Will he shew mercy? I hope he will, saith the poor trembling wretch. And then he turns at length. When God is dealing with the soul in order to conversion, it hath this hope in the midst of a great deal of fear and doubt,—Who knows but God will shew mercy to a returning soul? And thereupon it turns. So the object of his hope is now God to be reconciled,—present reconciliation.

But the object of this hope after conversion, all along, through his succeeding course, is God to be enjoyed in the final state; now more and more, and perfectly hereafter in that state, which is to be final and eternal.

And this the very state of the case itself doth plainly enough suggest to us. There must be this difference also, as to the object of the one hope and the other, according to the difference in the very nature of this and the other hope. The soul before regeneration, it can generally affect and covet to be happy, (which is natural to man,) and dread to be miserable; it is capable of being afraid of wrath and torment; and being so, the state of the case, as it is in view before it, not excluding hope, it can entertain some hope, an human rational hope amidst all that fear. And hereupon, the main thing that it is exercised and taken up about, is the present state of its case, whether God will be reconciled or no; but with final reference too, to its future state, that is, especially the privative part of it, salvation and escape from eternal wrath. It can very well entertain hopes, and admit of agitations of affections to what goes no higher than so, from the very nature of such a subject, an intelligent, reasonable soul, that is capable of happiness, and in general of desiring it; and that apprehends itself liable to misery, and that cannot, without dread and abhorrence, think of that.

But in the mean time, before regeneration it is incapable of any such workings and dispositions as do belong to the holy divine nature. It cannot yet love God; it cannot yet desire a felicity in him; it cannot covet to be like him, or to have that happiness in view which consists in the vision of him. This only belongs to its state after it is regenerate. When once a person comes to be a son, is brought into a state of sonship, and hath a divine nature imparted and communicated to him in regeneration; we see what his sense is, what a kind of happiness he is capable of relishing, and what, accordingly, his hope is. 1 John, iii. 1. When the apostle had told us, in the close of the foregoing chapter, "Every one that doth righteousness is born of God;" every one that hath the same holy nature, which belongs peculiarly, and in its highest perfection, to God alone; every one that hath any participation of that nature, doth thereby appear to be born of God, (or as the same matter is elsewhere otherwise expressed to be of God;) why, that being supposed, in the beginning of the next chapter, he breaks out into that transport and admiration, wherein we find him introducing the matter that follows: "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!" How come we to be called so? not as having a mere title, a name conferred upon us, and no more, but by having a new nature, a divine nature imparted. Adoption is founded in regeneration. There is no such thing as adoption that doth not presuppose regeneration and the participation of a new, divine, holy nature from God.

Now, this being communicated, the happiness that such are hereupon capable of is, and so much (though we do not know what it will be in the perfect state fully yet) we do know concerning it, that we shall be like him, (as it there is,) "for we shall see him as he is." This, they who are his regenerate sons, are capable of understanding, and relishing. And thereupon you see what their hope is; "every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as he is pure." The hope that a regenerate person, a son, hath concerning him, is, that "he shall be like him, and see him as he is."

This is a very considerable difference; though there is an hope (as hath been said) that hath influence upon conversion and salvation itself, yet there is an hope that afterwards hath influence upon the Christian's perseverance through the whole of his after course. These two do very

greatly differ, according as the state of the case doth; the one being part of the new creature, or of the new man, or principle belonging to the new nature, which is now regenerated. The other may be only an human, rational hope, assisted by common grace, tending towards, and improveable in the methods of God's gracious communications unto the other, heightened up unto the other; so, whereas the principal exercise of the soul under these previous workings, which lead and tend to conversion, is taken up about a present peace and reconciliation with God; but its workings afterwards, under the influence of that nobler and more sublime hope, is taken up about a final felicity and blessedness in him; and so "rejoices in hope of the glory of God," as the matter is expressed, Rom. v. 2. and "obtaining of salvation by Christ Jesus, (1 Tim. ii. 10.) with eternal glory;" that being the thing whereunto such an one finds himself actually called. That cannot but be his hope, that is called to an everlasting kingdom, and the glory of God by and through Christ Jesus; the call proceeding from the God of all grace: "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect." 1 Pet. v. 10. That which is the final term of his calling, is the hope of it, as the apostle speaks, where he prays for the Ephesians, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their minds might be enlightened, and that "they might know the hope of his calling." Eph. i. 18. It is another kind of knowledge they are capable of having concerning the "hope of their calling," or what they are to hope for in the state to which they are called after regeneration, and which proceeds from that divine light which is suitable to a regenerate soul, as such. I say, it is quite another sort of hope from that which it was capable of before; and so they are quite another sort of things, about which the soul is exercised and taken up.

And, in short, that which a person once converted and brought home to God, is entertained and taken up with through the remaining part of his Christian course, is the future state of things; the invisible state. As he is to be saved by hope, (as the text speaks,) brought on to final salvation by the continual influence of hope; and to have this influence upon his whole course unto final salvation, is the immediate product of faith; the soul believes the word of God revealing such and such things that are out of sight, and that come not within the view of common eyes;

and believing the word of promise, it hereupon hopes for the things promised, reacheth forth in vehement aspirings towards these things, and contends against the difficulties that lie in the way of attainment. And so we are told the holy soul, the just one, is to live by his faith. Heb. x. 37. And that we are told in the very beginning of the next chapter, is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. Agreeably to what the text saith, "we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope." It is hope pitched upon unseen things, upon the invisible state of things, by which a person is sustained, borne up through the whole of his course in this world, unto final salvation. "What a man sees, why doth he yet hope for?" It is a matter relating to an unseen state of things, the heavenly state, which is to influence a Christian all along, till he reach heaven.

And so much being premised, I shall now, for the clearing of this to you, (that as hope hath an influence, in order to conversion, so it hath afterwards, a continual influence upon perseverance, unto final salvation,) do these two things; 1st. Shew how, and in what way, hope hath this influence. And then 2dly. Shew you how necessary this influence is to this purpose; to wit, a Christian's perseverance; his holding on the prescribed course, till he reach the blessedness of it in salvation.

1. I shall shew you what influence it hath, or how it comes to have influence to this purpose. And whereas it is plain and evident, that hope cannot sustain a Christian in his course, if it be not sustained itself; I shall upon this head, more distinctly, do these two things; 1st. Shew what advantages such hope, kept up in life and vigour in the soul, doth afford a Christian's continuing in his course, in the ways of God, till he reach the end of it: and then shall, 2ndly. Shew what encouragement a Christian hath so to hope; or what it is, whereupon all along his hope is to sustain itself, that it may sustain him.

1. For the former of these, What advantages such an hope, kept up in life and vigour, is apt to afford a Christian, for the continuing of him in his way, or that he may persevere unto the end. Here I shall let you see, that it hath influence upon the many gracious dispositions, which it is necessary should be, and should be continued in the soul, in order to its persevering in the way of life. I shall instance in such things as do most directly refer to this very purpose, the keeping of a person with God, in that holy

course, into which, by conversion, he hath been brought. As,

(1.) An habitual seriousness. This is a gracious temper and disposition of spirit, that conduceth greatly to perseverance, and which is continually influenced by hope. By a serious temper of spirit, I mean (as the thing itself doth sufficiently speak to any one's understanding) a considering temper of mind; that is, a serious mind or spirit, that can consider, and is apt to consider things; nothing is more necessary to a Christian's perseverance in his course. Apostacy and defection from God is never so likely to prevail, as when persons do begin to remit the intention of their minds, as to the considering of things which they are so much constantly concerned to consider, in reference to their present states god-ward, and their future and final state. When once the soul is relaxed and loosened from the objects, which it should be principally exercised, and taken up about, then comes its danger. The unthinking soul falls into mischief, is liable to be caught by this, and that, and the other snare. If there be a disposition to ponder things, while a considering frame of spirit is preserved, the soul is safe. But what shall oblige it to consider those things that are most preservative of it, which have greatest aptness in them to its preservation, and its being kept from destructive snares? What can engage it hereunto, so probably and so strongly, as a continual, lively, vigorous hope?

You may see what that will signify to that purpose, by that of the Apostle, "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." 1 Peter i. 13. "Gird up the loins of your minds," a most emphatical expression, to signify a temper of spirit, most intent upon consideration. Then is the soul in a considering posture, when the loins of your minds are girt up, when fluid thoughts are collected, as more fluid garments are collected, and bound about a man by a girdle: when the more volative thoughts are drawn in, and made to centre upon the things that we are more deeply concerned to consider. Then may we truly say, this soul is composed to a special sobriety. These expressions do expound one another, gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober; a mind girt up in its loins is a considering mind, and that lies in nothing more fitly, and more truly, than in a certain sort of spiritual sobriety. And how is this influenced, and maintained in the soul? Why, by a continual hope,—hope to the end. This is naturally so, that

the hope we have of any design whatsoever, intends our minds, and collects them to the business: but if we have no hope, we are off from it. Whatsoever we have no hope of we abandon, we lay aside thoughts concerning it; it is to no purpose to consider, or think any longer about a business, in reference to which we have no hope. But as long as there is hope, there will be an agitation of thoughts, and the mind will turn itself this way and that, revolving things over and over. There will certainly therefore, be a considering habit of mind preserved, as long as hope remains in any liveliness and vigour, in reference to the great concerns of eternity that we have before us. And,

(2.) To our continuing in our course (if we be by conversion and regeneration brought into a truly Christian course) a steadfast resolution is of most constant necessity. That we may continue our course, we must be most steadfastly resolved that through the grace of God, we will not be put out of our way. There must be a "cleaving to God, with full purpose of heart." Acts ii. 23. And it is plain that a continual hope must influence this resolution; Why will I not forsake this way? Why am I (with dependance upon the grace of God) resolved to persist in it, that nothing shall turn me out of it? Why, I have a great hope before me, I hope for great things by persisting in this way. It is a way that leads to a blessed end, an end which the grace of God hath encouraged me to hope I shall in this way attain unto. The Apostle exhorts the Colossians that they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved from the hope of the gospel. Col. i. 23. Why was this new faith (as it was a new thing in the world at that time) to be so steadfastly stuck unto? why must there be so resolved an adherence to it? Why, there is the highest, and greatest, and most glorious hope held up in view in that gospel, or by that gospel which is the object of this faith; and which therefore claims and challenges this steadfast adherence to the thing which it represents. Therefore, you are not to be moved from what is contained in the gospel, because it contains the matter of so high an hope.

It is not tempting you by trifles, or shadows, by small or little things; is your hoped advantage, lying in this gospel that is now held up in view before you, which is to keep you unmoved. The object contains in itself the reason of the act, and the frame and disposition of the heart required in reference thereunto. And,

(3.) Love to God will certainly have a most powerful influence upon a Christian's love to God. Perseverance;—I cannot leave the ways of God, because I love him; he hath won my heart, I cannot think of departing from those ways in which I have met with him, and an acquaintance hath been brought about between him and me. And nothing can signify more to preserve and keep alive the love of God in the soul, in strength and vigour, than such an hope godward. I hope I shall see him ere long, and be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is. And whence is this to be hoped for, but from gracious communications from himself? I know it must be from his mere kindness, a good will to me, if ever I come to be finally happy in him, and enjoy him. The hope of so high and great things from him, how highly doth it endear him to us? Can I forsake that God, turn aside from following him, or walking with him, from whom I hope for great things? "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure." He makes it his business, so to work out that sin, that is, a departing from God; (for that is the notion of sin, aversion from God, turning off from him,) the soul would be rid of that: and hope maintains and keeps alive the love of God in the heart. I still hope for more and more from him, and therefore still love him more and more: this holds the soul to him. "Experience begets hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost." Rom. v. 4, 5. We love him. Why? "Because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19. What doth that mean? Is the meaning, that no body loves God, till they are assured, or have assurance of his loving them? No, that cannot be, there is many a sincere lover of God that hath no assurance of his love. But what must it mean then? Why, that (at least) they have the hope of it; for it is most certain, that with absolute despair, there must be most conjunct, pure, unmixed hatred. If there be pure despair, there will be pure hatred:—nothing but hatred of God, where there is nothing but despair of his love. As it is in hell, there is despair in perfection, and so there is hatred in perfection (as one may speak) in that horrid kind. The meaning therefore, can only be, "we love him, because he first loved us," to wit, because we hope so. It is not to be understood, that every one that loves God, hath an assurance that he is beloved of him: but he hath the hope of it, otherwise he could never love him; and if thereupon, the soul doth love him, then it saith, I must

never leave him, I must cleave to him as long as I live, and for ever, through all time, and to all eternity: nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord; nothing shall break those bonds. And most evident it is, that as that love is drawn out into continual exercise, it still doth, in all its exercises, run on with the exercise, and under the influence, of a continuing hope. I am still expecting greater things from him, and the more I expect, the more I love him; and the more I love him, the more I am resolved to cleave to him, and never to leave him. And,

(4.) Patience is another requisite to perseverance: and hope hath a manifest influence upon that. Patience is nothing else but a suffering power, an ability to suffer; by which our Saviour tells us, we possess our souls, that is, save them. It signifies indeed, both present liberty, and final safety; and that that possession of our souls in patience, preserves them. Possession, in that two-fold sense, signifies liberty and self-dominion. He is subject to another's power, that can suffer nothing; but he is master of himself that can suffer. If he have an ability to suffer, then he keeps his self-dominion. He can be master of his own mind, of his own reason, of his own conscience, of his own judgment, of his own faith: but if he can suffer nothing, he must resign all, and admit another master, he must enjoy his own thoughts, his own sentiments, his own reason, and his own conscience no longer. Thence comes apostacy, declension from God, his truths, his ways; I cannot suffer, I have no patience, no ability to suffer: then I must quit truth, holiness, and every thing, which, by my adherence to them, will expose me to the danger of suffering. But if there is patience, therein you possess your souls, you will thereby keep your liberty and self-dominion; so you secure to yourself final and eternal safety: and so keeping and possessing the soul, is in opposition to the final losing, or its being destroyed, and undone for ever.

And very plain it is, that hope is of most constant use and necessity, to the preserving and continuing this ability to suffer, this power of patience, or this passive power; nothing doth so much maintain it as hope. The occasion will not last always: I have the prospect of an end, and the hopeful prospect of a comfortable and good end. Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust, or have trusted, (so we read it, but it is in the original, because we have hoped,) in the living God. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

What a strange sort of men are these, that will endure to be so exposed, so scorned, so trampled upon, as they that bear the Christian name commonly are? What is the reason of it? What account will a reasonable man give, why he will so expose himself? I will tell you the reason; therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we hope in God, in the living God, and we are pretty well persuaded we shall not finally be losers; we shall not have an ill bargain of it at last. As the same Apostle, when he writes himself "an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ," seems to allow, that he was to doom himself to all the sufferings and calamities, that the enemies of the Christian cause could load him with, and lay upon him, for his assuming to himself such names of an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ. But why should Paul, that wise and prudent man, that learned man, that man of so considerable reputation among his own countrymen, why should he come to be written among the Apostles and servants of Jesus Christ? Why, saith he, it is in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. Titus i. 1, 2. I avow myself an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ upon this inducement, and for this reason, and so I mean to continue unto the end. It is the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to me. He whose nature doth not allow him to deceive, to whom it is impossible to lie, I firmly and securely hope in him; and therefore I will readily dispose myself to encounter all the difficulties and hardships, which the service of Jesus Christ can lay me open to. Again,

(5.) Contentment with that portion and allotment which God affords us in this world, is another great preservative from apostacy, or requisite to perseverance. And this is very much maintained by hope. If persons decline, and turn off from the holy way of the Lord, it is generally this world that tempts them. "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. iv. 8. But if a man be well enough satisfied with the portion (whether it be more or less) which God hath allotted him of the good things of this world, then he is safe from temptation. But how shall he come to be satisfied with a lesser portion of the things of this world? Why, it is the hope of enough hereafter that satisfied him:—I have no great things now, nor do I matter that, I am not solicitous about it, I hope for greater, and a better state.

What made Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, expose themselves to continued wandering, and to dwell in tents;

when God had given them a country (one of the best in the world) by special grant, to have it as their inheritance, yet they lived as strangers, even in their own country, dwelling in tents; so as that they declared themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth? What doth this signify and mean? Why, this declares plainly, that they seek a country, they hope and seek for a better country, than all the world can afford them; Heb. xi. 13. therefore they tell the world, and tell it plainly, while we are upon earth, we are but pilgrims and strangers here; the world can tempt us with none of its baits: let the things it presents to our view, and makes us an offer of, be never so great, never so special, they signify nothing with us, for every thing we can touch, that we can handle, or have to do with, smells of earth, and we are strangers and pilgrims here upon earth. And this was a plain declaration, their minds were higher, carried to somewhat in an higher region. They declare plainly, they are seeking a country. And what country is that? Why, a better and an heavenly country. And therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Heb. xi. 16. It was the hope of those high and great things above, that drew up their hearts, and therefore this world could not entangle them.—Their way was above, (as the way of the wise is,) to escape from hell and death beneath. But it was hope that carried them up into those higher regions, so far out of the reach of deadly snares; the snares of death, as the wise man calls them. And again,

(6.) As contentment is a great preservative from the danger of apostacy, or a great requisite to perseverance; so is the desire of the better things of the better world, that better country, a very good preservative too. We must know that the spirit of man must of course, when it is drawn off from one sort of objects, apply, and turn itself to another sort. It hath not its good within itself, it cannot be a deity, a god to itself; it must have a good to satisfy itself, *aliunde* out of itself. If it be not from this world that it looks for this good, it must find elsewhere, that which may be more suitable, and more grateful to it. Its desires, when they are confined, limited, and moderated by contentment, in reference to this world, are then removed and transferred to the things of the other world; and so it is kept in a steady, composed state. When it sees that the things of this world are not suitable, will not satisfy, it is not at a loss what it shall do next. A superior good presents and offers itself, and the new nature in it, doth attemper and suit its

desires to that. And if it do desire things of that higher and upper region, it is in no danger of being drawn off from God, while that desire remains, lives, and flourisheth, and is in any power with it.

But now it so much the more desires, by how much the more it hopes; desire languisheth, if hope fails, as it is in reference to any thing else, whereby as to the first appearance of good, it comes to its object. Is there any drawing forth of desire towards it, and we come to consider, and contemplate the matter, and we find it to be an unattainable thing, a thing to be despaired of, then we desert, desire fails, and grows flat of course. It is a thing rarely to be found, that desire remains in any vigour, to any object, in reference whereunto there is no hope, or in reference whereunto there is nothing but simple despair. Indeed, the first appearance, or view of goodness, or amiableness, in the object, may draw forth that which we call simple desire, so far as to put us upon the inquiry, is such a thing to be gained, yea or nay? And if we find it is not, desire fails, the hopelessness of the thing makes us lay aside the thoughts of it, and accordingly there is no more desire. If the desires of heavenly felicity live in our souls, this earth will never pluck us off from God; but that desire will last no longer than hope lasts, that such a state is not unattainable. We shall, by the grace of God, be enabled to reach the felicity of that state, we shall not be frustrated, or disappointed at length:—then saith the soul, I will hold on my course. And then again,

(7.) Watchfulness is requisite to a Christian's continued progress in his course to final salvation. But there can be no such thing as watchfulness without hope. Watching imports a continual design, and of self-preservation: but when the hope of that fails, then all subordinate and subservient means are laid aside. But this is a thing enjoined us, in order to preservation, to watch always. And to this I might add,

(8.) Pray always too. This is requisite, as most conjunct with the other. And sure we are, as there can be no watching, so there can be no praying without hope; this is most evident. And,

(9.) A complacential doing of good, or a disposition of doing good with complacency. This makes the ways of God pleasant to men, so as they will never leave them, nor turn aside from them: but it is hope that induceth them hereunto. It is a sowing to the Spirit, when we are doing

good. The Apostle calls it so. "They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 8. Then immediately follows, "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all, especially to them that are of the household of faith." This is sowing to the Spirit suitably, or subserviently to the kindness, and goodness, and benignity of the Divine Spirit. But whosoever sows, soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. That course of well-doing is continued, and the soul is held on in it, by the power and influence of a continued hope. "It is by patient continuance in well-doing, that we are to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, unto eternal life." Rom. ii. 7. I add again,

(10.) Fervency in a course of duty is a very great requisite to continuance in it. We shall soon grow weary of that course of duty, wherein we have no fervour in our own spirits. It is a wearisome thing to pray continually, without any fervour; and for such work as this we are now engaged in, to preach or hear, if there be nothing of fervour in us in these exercises, it is very dull work, and such as we shall not be well pleased to hold on long in; now it is plain, that hope maintains the fervour of the spirit in duty. "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom. xii. 11, 12. and "rejoicing in hope," are words immediately connected. And,

(11.) Christian temperance is a great thing to preserve us from apostacy. There is nothing that doth more effectually betray a soul into, and ingulf it in final ruin, than the letting loose sensual inclinations. And you find it is the great design of the gospel under which we live, and of the grace that appeareth in it, bringing salvation, "To teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus ii. 11, 12, 13. And how are we induced hereunto? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." There is nothing that in common experience proves so fatal to many, that had begun well in a course of religion. Some hopeful young ones, that have been struck with convictions, God hath begun to awaken them, to take hold of their spirits; and they have had some tastes and relishes of the word of God, and of divine and heavenly things: but we have found them recede, and go off again. And how came it to pass? Why, they lost all in a debauch, that extinguished the convictions of conscience, and the desires of

heart, that began to be stirred in them god-ward, and heaven-ward.

Now it is the hope of a soul, which is its safety in this case. What! Shall I lose so great an hope, for the pleasure of an hour, or a moment? It is because that I have great hope concerning this soul of mine, and concerning that vast, immense eternity, that is in view before me, and whereof I have the prospect that I will not do so; I am born to great hopes, and therefore I will not destroy them by so mad a folly as this, to throw away a soul, and to throw away so great hopes, to please two or three fools, that would only have me go to hell in company with them, or to keep them company there. No, if persons have any apprehension, that God hath been at work with them, about the affairs of their souls, in reference to eternity, this may be the beginning of a new birth, of a divine birth; and if so, whatsoever parentage one is born of, his hopes are suitable to his parentage. If I am under the regenerating, divine influence, born, or shall be born, (if things come to a good issue,) a son of the greatest of fathers, a child of God: then if a child, an heir, an heir of God, and joint heir of Christ. Then how high and great are my hopes? How glorious expectancies are those that I have in prospect before me?. And what? To lose all this for the pleasure of a debauch? It is hope that makes the mind sober, (as was before hinted,) "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." That you may be sober, that you may have sobriety of mind, of thinking, and of judging reasonably of things, keep hope in exercise; do but consider what you hope for, and you will be safe. And lastly,

(12.) Joy is a great requisite to perseverance, and will be of great use to us, in order thereunto. "The joy of the Lord is his people's strength," Neh. viii. 10. to carry them through the duties and difficulties of the Christian state. And how is that joy to be maintained? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" Rom. v. 2. and our rejoicing is to be in hope. Rom. xii. 12. It is hope that feeds joy in reference to things, while we are in this present state, which doth not afford much of immediate enjoyment, otherwise than that we have by anticipation. It is hope that directs to that which is within the vail; Heb. vi. 19. takes hold of invisible things, and so is as "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." The soul rejoiceth to find itself upon sure terms, rejoiceth in hope, in the strength

and power of that hope, which, as its anchor, is thrown within the vail, and takes hold of the unseen things there. "The God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13. as the Apostle prays for the Christian Romans. The more joy, the more vigour in your course: the joy of the Lord will be your strength, and the more hope, the more joy.

You see these many ways, hope cannot but have an influence unto Christians' perseverance in the way and course, into which regeneration and converting grace hath brought them.

The next thing will be to shew you, what encouragements a Christian hath thus to hope for, while his hope is to be sufficient for him all along in his course, something or other must be sufficient unto it, something or other must sustain it, that doth sustain him.

SERMON XIX.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING shewn what advantages hope gives a Christian's progress in his way, we now come to let you see, what ground a Christian hath for such an hope, to wit, that by the grace of God, and the assistances to be given continually from him, he shall be kept and preserved from the great danger of fatal, destructive backsliding and apostacy from God, and a departure from his ways; from turning aside into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity; Psalm cxxv. 5. and from returning into those ways at length, "which take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death." Prov. v. 5. But before I come to shew you what ground a serious Christian hath for such an hope, something I must premise unto you. As,

1. That the grounds which he had for his former hope before his conversion, and which had influence thereupon, do still remain, and are equally grounds to him of this con-

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tinuing hope that is to influence his whole after course, and with much more advantage. We are not to suppose that the grounds of the hope that I am now speaking of, do make the former grounds cease. The grounds of the former hope, that which I told you might be only, (and indeed must be before conversion,) no more than a rational human hope, assisted by common grace; what ground there was for that hope, doth still remain, and is still improveable to more advantage: and the grounds of this following hope are not in reference to those grounds privative, but cumulative, (as is wont to be said in such cases,) that is, they do not take away the former, but add thereunto. Whatsoever ground of hope there was before, for a poor wandering sinner to return, and come back to God, and seek reconciliation and peace with him, to wit, from the gracious nature of God, from the rich fulness of Christ's sacrifice, from the freeness of the gospel tender, and invitation, and from the power, and grace, and office of the Holy Ghost: these grounds do still remain, in reference to the present case, and are improvable, even with more advantage, as you will see in reference thereunto. And again,

2. This is to be noted by way of premise, That the hope which they are to take encouragement for, is not to be a rash, fearless hope. It is not to be an hope without fear, pray do not mistake the matter as to this, we are not to aim at any such hope as shall be exclusive of fear, or that shall make that an useless thing, an useless principle, an useless grace in the soul. We are told, "They are blessed that fear always; (Prov. xxviii. 14.) but he that hardens his heart, (that is in opposition to such a fear,) shall fall into mischief." And elsewhere we find such oppositions of fear to hardness of heart, made to one another. "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" Isa. lxiii. 17. and we are directed to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 3. and warned "not to be high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. and charged "to work out our salvation, with fear and trembling." Phil. ii. 12. Even they are so charged, whom the Apostle had a little before expressed his confidence concerning them, that "God that had begun a good work in them, would perfect it unto the day of Christ." Phil. i. 6. And yet he requires and charges them in his name, and by his authority, whom God had exalted to so high a pitch, as to give him a name above every name, wherefore, (saith he hereupon,) this charge I solemnly give

you, that his name and authority may be owned, not only in " my presence, but much more, being absent, you work out your salvation, with fear and trembling."

There is no such state of a Christian attainable in this life, that ought to make fear an useless thing, and to supersede it. I say there is no such state as this; no, nor undoubtedly in heaven itself, where reverence of God is higher than now we are capable of, infinitely, unspeakably, exceedingly higher. It will be part of that homage, that we shall be eternally paying to his throne, and part of our felicity too, because of the pleasantness of that temper, the suitableness and congruity of it to a right mind, apprehensive of what is due to the Eternal Being; and besides, we are told this is the very means of our preservation. He that hath promised to keep his, hath promised to keep them thus, " I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," I mean to make use of that as the great preservative principle in them. Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

Indeed the understanding of all this, doth but depend upon one plain thing, that it is fit and needful that every one should have a distinct notion of in his own mind, to wit, how vast the difference is between fear and fear;—the fear of reverence, and the fear of horror, (as I may fitly enough distinguish it,)—the fear of a saint, and the fear of a devil;—the fear of heaven, and the fear of hell;—so vastly different they are. The one fear doth involve hatred in it essentially, *odiumus quem mehamus*, we hate him whom we so fear, we cannot but do so; but the other doth essentially carry love in it. The fear of reverence carries a complacency in the dignity, honour, and exaltation of him, towards whom we exercise this affection: and yet it hath a collateral and secondary respect to our own interest too, and so ought to have, and must have; as the love we bear to God, and our true love to ourselves; the love by which we design glory to him, and the love by which we design blessedness in him, are the same love. That therefore is a further thing, that thereupon we are to consider. Again,

3. We must hereupon note this too, That the hope unto which we are to be encouraged of being kept from apostacy, and enabled to persevere, and hold on in the ways of God to the end, it must consequently be such as shall admit of, as shall not exclude, but infer all the subsequent cares and endeavours, that are most agreeable and corres-

pondent to such a fear, as hath been before expressed, to wit, our continual watchfulness over ourselves, our abstaining from known gross evils, our endeavour to repress the beginnings, the first motions and stirrings of sin, our giving ourselves to prayer, our meditating upon the things of God, our attending duty, and waiting on God in his ordinances, our avoiding temptations, and shunning the society of them that walk in pernicious and destructive ways. Our hope of being kept, it must not exclude, but infer, all this care and endeavour of our own, in order to our being so kept. As a man's hope of having his natural life, and health, and strength, and soundness preserved, ought to be with a conjunct care of himself all along. It were a mad hope, if a man should then hope that his life, strength, and soundness, should be preserved, if he starve himself, or stab himself, or poison himself, or run into houses infected with the plague, or associate himself with persons that have pestilential diseases upon them, and the like: this were a mad hope, that I should be kept well at this rate. And it is easily apprehensible how this is to be applied to our present case: we are to hope we shall be kept, but we are not to hope we shall be kept in a continual neglect of ourselves; if we will famish and starve our souls, if we will stab them in a liberty of known acts of sin, if we will infect them by running into contagious company, if we will associate with such, and familiarly converse with them that have the plague upon them, if we are not afraid of drawing contagion from so mortal breath, our hope will a be very foolish hope, and not the hope I am now to encourage. And,

4. We must note further, that, supposing that many, or any be in doubt whether they have yet an holy, good principle in them; whether they are yet come into the regenerate state, have that already inlaid in them, which the scripture calls the seed of God, and a divine nature; if (I say) any be in doubt about it, it is not needful that they should stay for a resolution, in order to the receiving any encouragement from what I am further to say: though they cannot so certainly say that the things that are after to be said do concern them as regenerate persons, as those that are already in a state of grace; yet they will find that there may be encouragement taken from thence, though not so directly in order to the bringing of them into it; and so none should think that what is said doth no way

concern them, because they are not yet certain that they are regenerate.

Whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of the recipient. If there be a regenerate principle, that will so much the more readily entertain and close with what is spoken for its own strengthening, and further invigorating, and for its nutriment. But if there be not, yet if there be a tendency that way, any seriousness of spirit about any such thing, and with reference thereunto, we must know that it is a true maxim in spirituals, as well as in naturals, *Eisdem nutrimur exquibus constamur*; we are nourished, and do consist of the same thing, the very same thing. And that which is suitable to the maintaining, enlivening, improving, and growth of a principle of divine life in the soul, is suitable, in some measure, to the begetting of it too. Even the same word, in the sum and substance of it, by which we are to grow, and which we are to receive as "sincere milk," for that design, that we may grow, and may be strengthened by it; by the same word, also, are we "begotten again by the word of truth." James, i. 17. And by the "incorruptible seed," the "word of God." 1 Pet. i. 20. "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." John, xvii. 17.

Now these things being thus forelaid, all that I shall say for the encouragement of such an hope as I am now speaking of, will be reduced, and is fitly enough reducible one way or other to this one ground, the gospel of the covenant of God in Christ. That lays before you the firm and sure foundation of such an hope; and it will indeed somewhat diversely give encouragement according to the different states of men, (though principally I intend now the regenerate state,) if you do but accordingly consider the different notions under which we may look upon this covenant; in short, we may look upon it either as proposed, or as actually entered. As proposed, so it gives a ground of hope to enter it; and thereupon gives a ground for all the consequent hope whereof I am speaking.

But if it be actually entered, and that can be distinctly, and with clearness reflected upon, then you have the nearer, the more immediate, the firmer, and surer ground, for such an hope, as I am now to speak of. And your hope ought to arise to proportionable degrees of life, strength, and vigour in you. But the great foundation of this hope lies here in the gospel covenant, whoever of you have any concern for your souls; whoever of you are bethinking

yourselves how not to perish, how at length to be saved; lo, here you lay your hope upon the gospel covenant, the covenant of God in Christ.

For do but consider, that the apostle, speaking of the case of the infidel Pagan world, and of the case of the Ephesians, when they were such, he saith, "Ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; and without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." Ephes. ii. 12. All the while that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise; all the while that you were as a people of another country, (as the expression signifies,) in being "strangers to the covenant of promise, and without Christ;" you were without hope too, and "without God in the world;" atheists in the world.

The ground of the Christian's hope, as to perseverance, is the gospel covenant, Christ being the great agent that was to bring about a relation; and in order thereunto to bring you into covenant with God through himself. If you know nothing of the covenant of promise, you are without hope. This is the sum of all; here must your hope be laid upon this great foundation.

And this is not a new thing, but as old as faith hath been in the world, and as holiness hath been, or any thing hath been of the divine life. This covenant of God in Christ, it is said even to be but confirmed when the law was given by Moses on Mount Sinai; the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ to Abraham. It was even confirmed before to Abraham; it received a new confirmation there; it was not made with Abraham then. Gal. ii. 16. It was then but confirmed to Abraham. This covenant of God in Christ being of a much more ancient date. David, when he lay a dying, here was the ground of his hope; "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although thou make it not to grow;" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. to wit, his house, spoken of before, "although my house be not so with God." God had said many things to him about his house and family heretofore, a great deal more distinctly and expressly than he doth usually to men about their houses and families, when they are to be extinct and gone. But David's mind was upon something else,—something greater and more considerable than all this; "Although my house be not so with God, (come of my house and external concernments what will,)

here is "all my salvation, and all my desire," that thou hast "made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" which had an aspect upon higher and greater things than that of a temporal kingdom in this world, how big so ever that may look in many an eye.

And, concerning David's understanding and knowledge in the mystery of Christ, (as I may use those words well enough in reference to him,) when we hear him speak so often of his hoping in the word of God, this must be the word which he is to be understood principally to mean, the word of this everlasting covenant; "I had fainted for thy salvation, but I hoped in thy word." Psalm cxix. 49. Intent he was upon salvation; and sometimes being ready to faint about it, his hope in God's word kept him from fainting; "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield." Psalm cxix. 114. I do hope in thy word. You have that which is agreeable, in another place, where he again professeth his hope in God's word, and invites all Israel to join with him in waiting for the Lord, (Psalm cxxx. 6, 7.) from day to day, more than they that wait for the morning; "Let Israel wait on the Lord, for with him is mercy and plenteous redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." This is the summary thing, the gospel of the covenant of God in Christ, which is the great ground and foundation of this hope.

But to speak more particularly and distinctly to it, you will have several grounds of hope some way or other reducible hither, if you will but consider sundry things that we have to reflect upon relating and belonging to this covenant. As,

1. The Author of this covenant is to be considered. It is God's own covenant; he is not only a covenanting party, but he hath formed the covenant, and is the first in the covenant. It is he that hath ordained and contrived the model of it; and doth propose it to us, and enjoin it upon us, as to what is our part in this covenant of God in Christ. And concerning him, though I might insist upon many things, I shall only mention these two, to shew how firm a ground of hope you have from the Author of this covenant, to wit, his all-sufficiency, and his faithfulness.

(1.) His all-sufficiency. When he was drawing Abraham into the covenant, or designing to confirm him in a covenant state, so he mentions himself, I am God all-sufficient; that was enough for his part. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," Gen. xvii. 1. that would be also enough

for Abraham on his part: as you know, if you have occasion to transact affairs with a man, to contract a covenant with him about matters of importance to you, the great thing you will have your eye upon is, Is the person I deal with sufficient? If you are sure that he is, you traffic with much more security, he being a man of known sufficiency. Saith God, I am an all-sufficient God; come, who hath a mind to deal with me? to transact with me, and traffic with me? who will come into my covenant? And,

(2.) His faithfulness is a most firm foundation of hope: such faithfulness as wherewith consists, no possibility of being false; "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised," Titus i. 2. "And by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." Heb. vi. 17, 18. You say, you shall one day sink, you shall fail, you shall perish, you shall be lost after so many stops in the ways of God. Think who hath promised you, The God, all-sufficient: and that he is faithful that hath promised.

And consider these things in reference to one another, his faithfulness to his all-sufficiency: he is therefore faithful because it is all-sufficient. It is a great matter, rightly to understand this. It is impossible to the perfection of the Divine Nature to lie, because he is God all-sufficient. Honesty, veracity, and truth, are not things of so ill repute among men, but that men would preserve their credit in the world, if they were not put to shifts, if they were not reduced to straits. They are commonly false, because they know not how to compass their ends; either they have not wisdom enough, or they have not power enough; but he that is all-sufficient, hath nothing to tempt him to falsehood. His perfect nature abhors it;—his all-sufficiency speaks his universal perfection, as you have formerly, at another season, been told. The matter is obvious, if we do but allow ourselves to argue upon it, (though indeed the thing little needs it,) even upon grounds that will be clear to every body.

There is no intelligent agent that doth any thing without design. As an intelligent agent, every human action is done for an end, for a proposed end. He that is the most perfectly intelligent Being, can do nothing but for some end. Now what end can he propose to himself to deceive a creature that he made out of nothing, but the other day,

and can throw into nothing, the next moment if he pleaseth? What end can he propose to himself, in deceiving a creature that he hath absolutely in his own power? Those words of our Saviour, how much of spirit and life do they carry in them? "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you." You may trust me; do you think I intended to make fools of you, when I persuaded you to be christians? Have I made you leave all this world, and made you give up yourselves to me, and put yourselves under my conduct, in expectation of great and glorious things hereafter, in another state? I tell you it is as I have said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions, and if it were not so, do you think I would not have told you?" would not I have been honest to you? would I have cheated you into a vain and false hope? so much reason you have to believe me from my word, that you may even believe from my silence; "If it had not been so, I would have told you;" I never yet said to you, shift for yourselves, I have never an heaven for you, I have never a ground of eternal hope for you; all that is vanished and gone. No, "if it were not so," as I say, "I would have told you." The divine all-sufficiency, and his fidelity, taken together in the consideration we have of him, as the great Author of his covenant, upon which you must depend for eternity, how firm a foundation of hope is this? and whatever of encouragement it gives to them who have entered this covenant, and can say, this God is now in covenant with me, and I in covenant with him. They have proportionable encouragement who are invited to enter it, for if I close with this offer, this is my case presently, and I have the same interest that any other hath had before me, who hath entered into it before. But again,

2. Consider the Mediator of this covenant. It is a covenant established in the hands of a Mediator, contracted by a Mediator, on purpose that it might be sure and firm; that it might have more stability, and might better hold than that covenant made with God immediately, or without a Mediator coming between God and man. And we are to consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as giving stability to it, and giving us ground of firm hope from it, under a three-fold notion, to wit, As dying for us; As living in us; And as gone into heaven before us.

1. Consider him as dying for us. And if his death be

considered in respect to this covenant, so it may be looked upon two ways, as *principium essendi*, and as *principium cognoscendi*, it may be looked upon as a ground of the being of this covenant; and it may be looked upon as a ground of the knowledge of it, that knowledge which we may have concerning it, both which are necessary to be the foundation of our hope.

(1.) As a ground of the being of this covenant. If it had not been for the death and sacrifice of the Son of God, there could not have been such a covenant. Psalm l. It is a covenant by sacrifice. As covenants have their ratifications, even among men by sacrifice, and the Jews have a notion *de sanguine sancisa sunt non abroganda*, those arguments that are ratified by blood, become most sacred and inviolable, never to be abrogated. The blood of Christ is called the blood of the covenant again and again; "And have counted the blood of the covenant an unclean thing." Heb. x. 29. "Our Lord Jesus Christ who offered himself to God, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect." Heb. xiii. 20, 21. And when he instituted his own supper, he calls it the cup of the New Testament in his blood. The word testament is the same used for covenant. How firm a covenant is that, that hath its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! His blood, who is the great Emmanuel, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who came down on purpose into this world, and united himself with the nature of man, purposely that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, and that by that death of his, he might ruin the designs of him that had the power of death; and might procure that stability should be given to the covenant of life and peace, even this covenant. And then,

2. The death of Christ is not only a principle, or ground of the being of this covenant, but of our knowledge of it too; upon which also depends our hope therein, that is, we know, being informed concerning the death of Christ, how it comes to pass that there can be such a contract and agreement between an offended God, and offending creatures, how comes it to pass? how was it brought about? Why, God hath set him forth "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; (to testify to all the world his righteousness;) that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25. This powerfully controuls the objection of any

unbelieving heart. How can it be, that the just and holy God, the glorious Majesty of Heaven should be offended by an impotent worm, and should threaten death for the offence, and yet forgive it? How can it be? Why, God hath set forth his Son, to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, to let all the world know, that now he can righteously pardon sin, and be reconciled to sinners, and take them into favour. What an encouragement is this to a returning soul, a returned soul, a soul that hath returned, or that hath a disposition, or mind to return! God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, he lifted him up upon the cross, and he is lifted up in the gospel dispensation, to tell the world. Now, sinner, the matter shall not lie on me, or on my part; if there be still a breach between me and thee, it is not because I cannot be reconciled, but because thou wilt not be reconciled; I can be reconciled, I have my satisfaction in my Son, and if there be a continuing breach, it is because thou refuseth, and despiseth the terms of peace that are offered, and doth trample upon the blood of the covenant, as if it were a profane thing. But to a serious considering soul, one that hath returned, or is upon his return to God in Christ, how firm a foundation of hope is this! I know the justice of God, (the only thing I had to dread, as that could never be reconciled to me,) is satisfied if I return, and shall never have any quarrel with me, if I keep on in the prescribed way that leads to life. Saith the Apostle, "Abide in him, (that is, in Christ, who is the great reconciling sacrifice,) that when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming. 1 John ii. 20. But then,

2. Consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as living in us, as well as dying for us. He gives stability to this covenant, and so is the ground-work of our hope, as he hath been pleased to unite himself with our souls, and take up an indwelling and abode there. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted, and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints the height, and breadth, and depth, and length; and may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge." Eph. i. 3, 17, 18, 19. He testifies his own love by his indwelling presence, and that way he secures you, that the covenant remains stable and firm between God and you. I dwell in you, to keep this always a clear and indubitable thing with you, that God is your's, and you are his, by the tenor of

his own covenant. And again, you are to look upon Christ in reference to this covenant,

3. As ascended, and having entered the heavens on our behalf, upon our account, together with all that is connected therewith, and consequent thereupon. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, and is at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. viii. 33, 34. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John ii. 1. So he is said to mediate for us, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb. vii. 18. And it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Being seated and enthroned in glory, with that very design, that though there may be many offences on our part against the tenor of our covenant, yet they shall not make a final breach; but that still the returning soul shall find mercy, and that still that mercy shall be free. "Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married to you, I will heal your backslidings, and receive you graciously, and love you freely." Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22. I might add,

4. The immediate Agent for bringing of souls into this covenant state, and continuing them there. And how great a ground have you of hope from thence; that is, that the Holy Spirit is appointed purposely by office, to transact this affair with souls; at first to bring them into covenant with God in Christ, and then, from time to time, to confirm their standing, and preserve them in the covenant state. This is that to which he is appointed, to which his very office leads to; that which we find him concerned to do, not occasionally, not on the by, but *ex officio*. A greater ground of hope cannot be conceived than this. How intent is God upon it, that his covenant with souls shall be a firm, stable, continual thing!

SERMON XX.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

It remains now to shew you, that the influence which hope hath to this purpose, it is not merely necessary to a Christian's better progress in his way and course, but to his progress at all, to any progress which he could make in such a course; to wit, it is not only requisite to the better being, but to the being itself of continued Christianity, so that without hope, there would certainly be a failure; and God, who hath absolutely determined this end, (that his elect shall hold out through the whole of their course,) hath also determined this means, viz. that he will preserve and maintain that hope in them throughout, by which they shall be enabled to hold out to the end: and therefore the certainty of the necessity of the influence of hope to that purpose, is what we have now to make to you. And in order thereunto, we need but to consider in general, 1st. The course of our own operations, such as are internal, and wherein our spirits within us do exert their power and vigour day by day. And then, 2ndly. To consider the special and most natural and proper work of hope. If we do but consider our own nature, and most con-natural operations; and if we do but consider the nature of hope, and what its special and con-natural work is, it will be plain, that such a continued course could not be held, but by the influence of hope.

1. Let us reflect upon the proper con-natural operations of our own spirits. This will be of real use to us, not only as it serves the present purpose, but as it may give us a clearer and more distinct notion of ourselves, which we do need to have our minds furnished with. There are many that do use this body, (for a whole life time that they live in it,) and the several parts and members that belong to it, they do their proper offices with them day by day, and yet seldom, or ever, allow themselves to make a reflection, what a sort of creature is this body of mine? and how, and by

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what means do the several parts of it serve for those several purposes for which I use them daily? Among all those that do use the body, and the several organs and instruments of action that do belong to it, how seldom do the most that do so, ever take notice what a sort of structure this is, and how it comes to be framed for such uses as the several parts of it serve for! That argues a great deal of stupidity among us, that we should move our hands and feet, and eyes, as we do from day to day, and never consider with ourselves how these come to be moving things, or which way, or by what means they are moved; as to think of the many instruments of this body that serve the purposes of motion, with what curiosity all those muscles are contrived and framed, without which there could be no motion, and which if there were not such variety of them, there would not be that variety of motion that we find, so many several muscles, no less than six belonging to each eye, that it may be capable of moving this way, and that way, upward, downward, obliquely, and transversely. There could be no motion, if there were not such instruments lodged and placed on purpose to subserve this end.

And as little do the most consider the movements of their own spirits, of their inward man; what kind of inducements they are that the mind of man is carried by, this way and that; how it is enabled to form designs and to contrive methods for the accomplishment of them, and to take such and such courses to bring them about. We use these noble powers and faculties every day, which we never consider, never contemplate. If we did allow ourselves to reflect and look a little inward upon ourselves, especially upon the powers of our own minds and spirits, and consider how they come to be engaged in action, this way and that, it were impossible but that such contemplation as that would carry up our souls to adore their own Father, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights: He that had the fashioning of the spirit of man within him, and who doth order the course and current of all its motions, together with the inducements by which it should be made capable of moving this way and that, with so singular and profound wisdom, as that, if we did but more in this respect consider ourselves, we could not but more admire him.

But this is plain and evident, that whether you look upon the spirit of man as rational, or as regenerate and holy, it cannot but move towards an end. There is nothing that a man doth as a man, no human action (as such) but is done

for an end. And there is no end that any can propose to himself, but under the notion of attainable; and there is nothing that a man can design or project as attainable, but it must be also in as much as it is attainable and hopeful; hopeful, inasmuch as hope hath reference to that which is good, and that which is future; inasmuch as that which one proposeth to himself, under the notion of an end, must be a good. That which is apprehended as an evil, we avert, we shun, we fly from naturally, by the natural constitution of our own souls: and that which we apprehend as good, we pursue and press towards it. Hope having for its object only that which is good, and that which is future, a distant good that I am not possessed of yet. It is impossible I can propose any thing to myself as my end, but at the same time, when I make it my end, I make it the object of my hope; and while I am pursuing it, all the series and course of the actions which I do in the pursuit and prosecution of it, I do continually, as having my mind all along influenced and animated by the hope of attaining it; for if I did not hope, I would give it over, never make one step more towards it. That whereof I simply despair, I must by the necessity that my own reason lays upon me, (as I am a reasonable creature,) give it over, and do no more towards it.

This is the state of things with man as he is a reasonable creature. Look upon his soul as it is rational; thus it is with him: and look upon it as regenerate and holy, that spoils nobody's intellectuals. A man is not less rational for being regenerate, but the more; it mends his intellectuals. Them that were before foolish, and deceived, and disobedient, and serving divers lusts and pleasures, when by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are (as it were) new made; now they recover their understanding, and a rectitude of mind to that degree, that they now act more like men than ever they did before. And therefore, whether you look upon the soul of man as rational, or as regenerate, the influence of hope is of most absolute necessity to his pursuing any end or design whatsoever. But then,

2. If you do also consider the nature of hope, and its most proper and con-natural work, to wit, to bear up the soul in a continual conflict with the difficulties it meets with, or is liable to meet with, in the way to its end. Therefore (as I told you before) as the object of hope is somewhat good and future, so it is also attended with diffi-

culty. So moralists usually give the notion of hope, and add that as the proper distinction of it from mere desire; for the object of desire is also somewhat good and future, appearing to be good and at a distance. If it were good, and not future, it would be the object of delight and joy; that is the exercise of the soul towards a present good, and wherewith it hath actual union already. But a distant good, both that which is apprehended to be in itself good and desirable, and good for me, and which is at a distance, the affection that the soul exerciseth towards it, is desire, unto which if you superadd that further character of the object, to wit, an arduousness and difficulty of attaining the thing I propose to myself, then it becomes the object of hope. It is the proper and con-natural work of hope to contend with difficulty in attaining, or in the way towards the attaining that good, which we propose to ourselves to enjoy.

Therefore now, this being the office and work of hope, its proper and specifying work, that by which it is distinguished from mere desire, to cope and contend with difficulties that lie in the way of attaining my end; the many difficulties that do fall into the course of a Christian, do give him that constant exercise through the whole of his course, that if there be not an hope maintained in him, proportionable to those difficulties, and that may enable him to keep on the conflict with them, the whole design of Christianity must needs be laid aside, and given up. It is not possible, that according to the constitution of the human nature, (and especially taking it in its regenerate state, which makes it so much the more reasonable and intelligent thing, than it was before,) I say, it is impossible it could hold on that course, were it not by the influence of this hope.

And that leads me to consider, particularly, the many difficulties that occur in the course of a Christian, which are only superable by that principle of divine hope which God hath planted in him for this very purpose, to keep him in that course which he himself hath prescribed to him, and which leads to that glorious, blessed end, his own salvation.

I shall but mention to you, to this purpose, some of the greater and more observable of those difficulties which a Christian's hope is to contend with, and must conquer for him, that he may be finally saved. As,

Difficulty 1. The invisibility of those objects, about

which he is to be principally exercised through the whole of his course. When this is the state of one's case, that the objects wherewith we must have most of all to do; and wherein the sum of our felicity lies, and from whence all our present vigour and liveliness, and the continued strength of our souls for all the exercises of the Christian life is to be drawn forth; when they are all things that lie quite out of sight with us, what should a man do in this case if it were not for hope? That hope which has a pre-apprehension of such things, and makes a representation of them to me, though they are unseen things. Herein lies the peculiarity and glory of hope, that it can do so. With that sort of objects doth its chief business lie. As in the remaining part of this verse, "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" If there were not such a principle and power in a Christian as hope, referring to things unseen, whereas all his support, and all his vigour, and the liveliness of his spirit, through the whole of his course, must be derived and drawn from such things, what would become of him, if he had not that principle in him, by which he could converse with things that are out of sight?

You have been formerly told, that hope, in all its exercises with reference to the final felicity of a saint, it grounds upon faith. I first believe the divine word, and that word becomes to me a clear and vivid representation of all things whereby the soul goes forth, in all the power of hope, to contend forwards towards them. It reaches forth to them by hope, when once it hath believed the reality and truth of them by faith. And so you come to have these two twisted together. Their object is the same, and their exercises conjunct, though they are distinct. "Faith is the substance (the hypostasis) of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1.

To tell a Christian that hath engaged in a new and distinct way from that which is held by the universality of men besides, "You are now launched out upon a peculiar bottom of your own, pray what are the things that you design to entertain yourself with from day to day through the whole of your course? Why, they are things (saith he) that lie quite above this sphere,—things quite out of sight to you, and things that are quite out of sight to myself, as to any such eye as is common to me and to you. But, then, how will you come at these things?—What commerce have you with them? Why, I have that hope within me,

grounded upon a steadfast belief of the divine revelation of such things as I am sure cannot deceive me, by which my view of these is as clear as the things that are seen are clear to your view. And I should disdain to have my principal converse with them, or that they should be the chief object of the exercise of this soul of mine, now by divine grace renewed, filled with new light, and with new inclinations, if they were not things of that peculiar and distinct kind that they are of, that is, invisible. If they were things that could be seen; if they were things that lay obvious to the notice of so mean a principle as your sense is, they would be too base things for me, I could not tell how to warrant myself, to justify myself; I could not answer it to myself, much less to him that hath given me the new law that I am to be governed by, if I should longer confine myself to so mean things: but because they are things not to be seen, quite out of sight, therefore doth my soul choose that noble employment, to be taken up about these things peculiarly from day to day. If they were not so high as to be quite out of sight; they were too low, and too mean for me." So saith the renewed soul.

But here is a difficulty not superable by any thing but a divine hope; that the best of the things which the soul is to be conversant about, and taken up with every day, lie quite out of sight; what could we do in such a case, if it were not for such an hope as can see, and discern, and anticipate, and give a preventive enjoyment of things that cannot be seen? And,

Difficulty 2. The suitableness and gratefulness of things of sense, of sensible things, is another great difficulty, that our hope is continually to conflict with, and to carry the Christian over. Things that are more suitable to an animal life and the sensible nature; they are things that lie under view continually; they are present and obvious; they are pleasing and entertaining to the sensitive nature that we carry about with us. And yet the soul must be under continual restraint as to whatsoever complacential relishes it can ever take in such things. Here lies the difficulty; here are things suitable and pleasing to sense, to flesh, and blood; and in reference to these things the soul can exert no desire, no delight; can take no grateful complacency in them, but is under continual restraint. The regenerate soul cannot wallow in sensual pleasures; it may not do so; it hath a law laid upon it, and a law put into it, by which it finds itself to be under a prohibition.

And therefore is this sort of men a wonder to the rest of the world; they think it strange they do not run with them "into the same excess of riot." 1 Pet. iv. 4. They cannot allow themselves to be sensual with the fleshly, worldly with the worldly, covetous with the covetous. If they do, they call their own state and standing in Christ under dreadful suspicions. If they can be ambitious and covetous, and voluptuous, men grossly voluptuous, they draw their state into question. But what is it that restrains them, and composes them to an holy kind of severity in this respect, but the power of divine hope? "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." 1 Pet. i. 13. Here appears the necessary influence of this hope to preserve a just restraint on the soul through the whole of our course, while our way lies amidst so many sensible things, that are so entertaining and tempting to our natures. We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit. ii. 11, 12.

It must be considered, that regeneration and the participation of the new nature (as I have told you before) did not spoil any man's reason, nor his intellectuals; so, nor doth it spoil his sensitive faculties neither. Such an one you must understand still to have as good senses as other men have, and senses as apt to entertain and please themselves, on proper suitable objects, as other men. Do you think they cannot taste the relishes of meats and drinks, as well as others can, or what else may be pleasing and grateful to the bodily sense? But they may not, they are under a restraint; they must converse shyly and cautiously, and with great circumspection, with all such kind of objects. And what doth enable them to do so? They are enabled to be sober, because they "hope continually,"—hope on to the end "for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" and their "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And in the power of that hope they live, not only righteously and godly, but soberly, in this present world.

Though that is an argument, indeed, of the general languor of Christianity at this day, and particularly of Christian hope, that greater latitudes are commonly taken among those that profess religion, in these our days, than have been heretofore. And it is sad to think it should be

so as to meats and drinks, and apparel, and whatsoever borders upon luxury. Truly reformed Christendom is not itself; England is not itself; London is not itself; the families of persons professing godliness are not what they were in these respects. And certain it is, by how much more sensual inclination doth prevail, Christian hope doth proportionably so much the more languish. And,

Difficulty 3. Another difficulty, that the hope of a Christian has to contend with, is, his foregoing all that he hath in this world for Christ's sake, whensoever he is thereunto called, by the concurrence of Christian precepts with present providences. When those so state his case to him, as that it comes to this present posture; things stand thus with him, and towards him, as they lie under his present view in such a juncture. "I must now disobey Christ, or I must lose and forego what is most desirable and delectable to me in this world, it may be, this very life itself. So hath the divine rule, and the divine providence, taken together, stated my case, as to bring matters to this pinch, this necessity. I must forsake all, abandon whatsoever is most pleasing to me in all this world, even life itself, if that be required and called for upon the same terms."

There is a mighty difficulty in this case upon persons that dwell in human flesh, and that have faculties about them which do contemper and suit them to this sensible world in which they live. They have not only the difficulty upon them, that, while they enjoy such things they must enjoy them under a restraint, (as you heard before,) but whensoever they are called for; they must part with them without regret; willingly part with, and forego all. They cannot enjoy them, but under restraint; and they must part with them, and that without regret, if they be called for. As it is not more the commendation than it was the duty of those of whom the apostle speaks: "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Heb. x. 34. And why did they so? They did it in the power of this same Christian hope, as knowing they had in heaven "a better and more enduring substance." It was the hope of that which made them willingly part with, and forego, all that they had and enjoyed here.

And this is the tenor of the Christian law that lies upon them, as you have it from the mouth of our blessed Lord himself: "If any man doth not forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" Luke xiv. 33. he cannot be a

Christian, unless *(supposits supponendis)* supposing such things as may be supposed, he doth forsake all, when the particular juncture happens; he doth now discover that he hath not the root of the matter in him, if he be not content to forsake all for my sake. But it is a Christian hope that enables him to do so; because that hope possesseth him with a persuasion that he shall gain by it more than all he looseth. "We have forsaken all and followed thee," say the disciples unto Christ; and you shall be no losers, saith he to them. Take but my word, and you will have ground enough for that hope, that it shall not turn to your final loss. None that forsake houses, or lands, or father, or mother, or brother, or sister, for my sake, and for the gospel, but shall have in this world an hundred-fold, and hereafter eternal life. And it is the hope of this that makes a Christian willing to say, Then I can be content to let all go; aye, even let all go; he hath not deceived me that hath told me, and he will never deceive me that hath told me, that I shall not be a final loser by it at length. And,

Difficulty 4. There is this further difficulty in it, that he must, in some cases, not only lose all that he enjoys, but he must suffer all that it can be in the power of men to inflict, as to positive miseries and evils, that are of the greatest pungency unto the flesh and the sense that we carry about with us. All must be willingly undergone that is evil to our flesh, as all must be foregone that is good and grateful to it. And what shall enable any to do so, but the power of this hope?

How full is the scripture and history of these instances! As full as it is of instances of the continual persecutions of Christians and Christianity itself, from age to age, ever since there came to be any such thing obtaining in the world. And it is proportionably full of instances of the power of this hope, carrying them whose hearts it did animate, through whatsoever difficulties they had to encounter in this case. That "cloud of witnesses," (which the apostle sets before our eyes in that 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and that we referred to but now,) so he calls those many witnesses, a cloud, a mighty cloud of such witnesses, all testifying to this one thing, to wit, to the power of that faith, and consequently to that hope, by which, these mentioned were carried through such sufferings, calumnies, as there you read of: "They were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they were sawn asunder, they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins,

being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" men "of whom the world was not worthy." And amidst all these things they despised deliverance. And why? Because they hoped for "a better resurrection." It was that faith which carried them through all, which is described at the first verse, to be "the substance of the things not seen, and the evidence of the things hoped for." Heb. xi. 1. The great things we hope for are made substantial to us; we have that clear and substantiating representation of them before our eyes. And therefore, how many thousand deaths can we go through by the power of this hope;—that hope itself being upheld and maintained all along by an immediate divine power?

And therefore is it that we read of such joy, and triumph, and exultation, in the midst of all these sufferings, which it was possible for human wit to invent, and human power to execute. It was not yet more than what they have been enabled to bear, and bear with a great deal of triumph many times; so as that it appeared that they had all under their feet; they could trample upon dangers and deaths, and were superior to them; they could not fasten upon them, they could take no hold of their spirits. If one should lead you through the sufferings of Christians in the ten persecutions by Pagans; their sufferings afterward by the Arians, who were not less bloody and cruel than the former; their sufferings more lately by the Papists, which after followed, from age to age, for twelve hundred years together; sufferings in this kind in this land, and sufferings in several adjoining countries. How numerous instances have we of the power of this hope in carrying the poor sufferers through, so as that not only have they not been removed from their Christian profession by all that they have suffered and endured; but not from their alacrity and cheerfulness of spirit: yea, that hath not only continued, but increased, and grown higher, more and more vigorous and glorious in them, by how much the more the approaches of trouble and danger were nearer. The speeches that have been uttered by many of them, even in the midst of their sufferings, have shewn a triumphant glorying joy in their hearts, which is the continual issue of this hope: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" and thereupon "we glory in tribulation." Rom. v. 3, 4. They gloried in tribulation, because they did rejoice in hope of the divine glory.

And therefore have they been enabled to brow-beat their

enemies, their tormentors, the executioners of all those tragical things upon them which they suffered; as when one should be able to tell the tyrant, after he had received so many wounds in his body, I thank thee, (oh tyrant,) that thou hast made me so many mouths wherewith to preach Christ; for I take every wound thou hast given me to be a new mouth wherewith to utter the divine praises, and wherewith to preach and magnify my Redeemer. With multitudes of instances that one might give of the like kind; which shew that the hope that lived in their souls, whilst they were even dying, did not only keep them from denying Christ,—did not only maintain religion, and keep that alive in them; but made it triumph in an high degree of liveliness, vigour, and joy, that shewed itself more exalted amidst those exercises, than when there were no trials, no danger in view. And again,

Difficulty 5. The many tempations and buffetings in their spirits, which Christians do more ordinarily experience in their course through the world. Nothing could carry through the vexation of this, (which cometh nearer, a great deal nearer, than what men can do when they only torture the outward man,) but only this hope: "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Though we be vexed with his suggestions, and very vexatious ones sometimes they are, when blasphemous thoughts are injected and cast in; there is an endeavour to fence against them, but they cannot keep them off; the tempter indeed cannot make the soul close or comply with the design of his temptations, but he doth vex by tempting; and that temptation cannot but be vexing, when the soul is solicited to think all the evil thoughts that the wicked one can be author or parent of to him, concerning God, and Christ, and religion, and many false ones concerning himself. All the continual vexing temptations that the soul is followed with from day to day, it is only the hope of final victory that carries it through. I hope it will not be so always; I hope God will give me a complete victory at last; he will bruise Satan under my feet ere long. And,

Difficulty 6. The complication of bodily and spiritual distempers together, so incident even to the generality of Christians; a great deal of lassitude, and dullness upon the outward man; the prevalence of melancholy fumes and vapours, which fall in with a dark mind and dead heart; and for those continual outcries, "Oh, wretched man, that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Rom. vii. 24. It is only deliverance in hope that carries through all this difficulty: "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 57. I have conquest and victory in Christ, that hath loved me; I am many times in myself overcome, but in him many times I do overcome, and shall finally overcome. And,

Difficulty 7. Divine desertions: when all these happen to meet together upon a poor creature, and God is withdrawn over and besides,—what a difficulty is here? The withdrawing of such a presence as even that wicked Saul was capable of, how distressing was it to him when he was sensible of it! There was a presence of God, whereof he had experience; but far beneath the excellency and delectableness of that gracious divine presence that he affords to his own, those that are peculiar to him: yet when Saul had lost that more exterior divine presence, saith he to Samuel, (when he had procured him to be raised from the dead, as that text doth please to express,) "I am greatly distressed; the Philistines make war upon me, and God is departed from me." 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

And it is so with a poor Christian; many times men are let loose upon him; the devil is let loose upon him; there is a great deal of distemperature and deadness within; and at the same time God is gone and withdrawn from him; in his sense and apprehension gone; to appearance gone. And in that case, as to actual comfort, *idem est esse et apparere; idem non esse, et non apparere;* to seem and to be, as to comfort in such a case. Here is nothing to bear up now but hope. I hope all this darkness will be over; all these clouds will vanish and flee away: "I will hope in God, that I shall yet praise him; for he is the health of my countenance, and my God;—why art thou cast down, O my my soul? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him." Psalm xlii. and xliii. I shall yet see a morning after so black and tempestuous a night. And,

Difficulty 8. The wearisomeness of duty and exercises of religion, in the midst of all this, is yet a further difficulty to a poor awakened soul. That is, he finds this to be the state of his case, that, in all the mentioned respects, let it be as ill with him as it can be supposed, yet he must not turn aside from following the Lord. I am in the way wherein I must persist; I must pray still, and hear still, and approach his table still. To go on in such a course of duty as this, when the mind is dark, and the heart is dead, and

there is a great weight and pressure lying upon the soul, and God is withdrawn, and I come to one duty after another, and one ordinance after another, and get nothing; this is hard and heavy work; still to be (as the case is represented with the disciples) fishing all the night, and nothing taken. Now it is nothing but hope that can support and bear up in this case; this is the way of the Lord in which I am, and this way, I hope will have a good end. Though I walk heavily, and the chariot wheels seem to be taken off; though my soul is not the chariot of a willing people, as sometimes it hath been; yet I must hold on my course; I must persist in it. There is that in him all this while, that will not let him desist, will not let him give over; no, by no means; he hath that sense of duty, that conscience towards God, that light concerning the equity and reasonableness of the thing that keeps him to it. God must have his homage, however it is with me, whether it be better or worse; I must not defraud God; I must do such and such acts, as acts of duty and obedience to the Lord of my life and being, whatever becomes of me. He hath a secret hope, that all will issue well; and therefore holds on in his course. Fear will not let him go back; and hope draws him forward; for we are not to suppose that the asserting the necessity of the one of these is a diminution of, or detraction from, the necessary influence of the other. We need all God's means and methods to help and urge us on in our way and course. And I might add to all this,

Difficulty 9. The continual view of prevailing wickedness; a most afflicting and discouraging thing! When a Christian's way towards the end God hath set in view before him lies in a world over-run with wickedness, and wherein they that curse God are secure; he can turn his eye no way but he sees a world full of atheism, full of infidelity, full of contempt of God, and full of rebellion against him. I hope (saith he) truth, and righteousness, and religion, and the love and fear of God, will triumph over all this at last. And because he so hopes, he persists and goes on in his well-chosen way. And in the last place, which I will close with,

Difficulty 10. The slow progress of the Christian interest, and the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ in the world; a most afflictive discouraging thing to all that are lovers of "our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Indeed, it is that which would have a more particular aspect upon the con-

dition of the faithful ministers of the gospel to see that the most part of their labours is labour in vain.

And you know how far the temptation as to this hath prevailed: I said, I will speak no more in his name, (saith the prophet,) " but thy word was as fire in my bones;" Jer. xx. 9. that was not to be restrained. It is a very uncomfortable thing to labour in this kind, with the souls of men, which we apply ourselves to as reasonable, as intelligent, as capable of understanding us, and understanding the value of souls, and the differences of time and eternity, of present and everlasting things; to deal with such upon agreed principles between them and us; so as that they say, whatsoever we speak to them in the name of the Lord, it is all true. They grant as much as we would have them grant, and acknowledge whatsoever, as to every thing we propound to them, especially in the greatest and most important things, which are also things of the greatest evidence and clearness, so as to force an acknowledgment; and so as that, when we deal with men about these things, (as you heard from that scripture lately,) we have nothing to do but to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. We appeal to you, whether these things be not true that we say to you, in the name of the Lord, yea or no. And they are generally acknowledged to be so. It is acknowledged that there is a world to come; that there is a state of retribution; that there is a judgment day, when men are to receive " the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil;" and wherein only a spiritual holy life, begun here in this world, will end in eternal life; and prevailing wickedness, continued in, will end in eternal death.

These things we represent and lay before men in the name of the Lord, and they say it is all true. And yet they are the same men, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris;* though we have convinced men, we have not conquered them; we have persuaded, and all signifies nothing; and it is because they have no hope. It is an observable expression, that, in the 18th of Jeremiah, (I have formerly told you of another like it, chap. ii. 25. and it is worth our notice,) " Return ye, now, every one from his evil ways, and make your ways and your doings good." Jer. xviii. 11, 12. So God bespeaks them by the prophet, or the prophet bespeaks them in the name of God: " But they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices,

and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." Because there is no hope; we have no hope that ever we shall be able to alter our course, or that ever we shall be able to do good of it in an attempt of reformation; and therefore, we will go on as we have done.

Truly then, this is the sense and posture of them that we have to deal with in the name of the Lord; they will not turn, because there is no hope; the case would be the same with us now, who so deal with men; that is, we should give over treating with them if we had no hope; we would speak to them no more in that name, nor open a Bible in our solemn assemblies, if we had no hope; but, because we have this hope, we use great freedom of speech, we hope we shall prevail at length; and we hope, however, that, our blessed Lord Jesus shall have a glorious body out of this world before he hath done; a glorious community, that shall be associated to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven; the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" whether men we speak to now in his name do hear or forbear, he shall have a glorious assembly above. "He will be glorified in all them that believe," because the gospel testimony was received. That will be a triumphant day; and our hope of bearing a share and part in the triumphs of that day carries us through; and we go on, notwithstanding this great difficulty; a principal difficulty it is to us. But it is a common difficulty to "all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" according as it is the common desire to have the Christian religion, in the power, life, and vigour of it, spread; and that more souls may be proselyted and brought in: all that love Christ, and all that love the souls of men, cannot but have this desire; and accordingly the difficulty and trouble is great that they have continually to conflict with, that so little is done in this case, and that they see so little done in their day. But the hope of a glorious issue must carry you through all these difficulties. This will have a glorious end at last.

SERMON XXI.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

WE have insisted largely in opening to you the great important truth contained in these words; and now, our yet remaining business is to make some use of it, which will be,

Use 1. In divers instructive inferences that this truth will afford us. As,

Inference 1. If we are saved by hope, then we are lost by despair; no inference can be more plain.

If the souls of men are to be saved by hope, they are liable to be lost by despair. And it hath been my great design, from this and some other texts, to do what in me should lie to keep you from that horrid gulph. But I must in faithfulness tell you, that there is, as to this, most danger where there is least apprehension or suspicion of it. There is a raging despair, and there is a silent dead despair. This latter is the fullest of danger, according as it is less obvious unto observation, and lies as a mortal disease in wrapping the hearts of them who suspect nothing less than that they should be despairing creatures. But when we are told that we are saved by hope, it cannot be understood by any hope whatsoever; for there is an hope that will undo, that will destroy; and so you may, ere long, have opportunity to know too, that there is a despair which is as necessary, as there is a hope that is mortal and destructive; but there is with all a deadly despair, that kills and destroys when it is never felt.

When we say we are saved by hope, it must be meant by the truly Christian hope; that hope that is vital, lively; the *terminus productus* in regeneration: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 3. We are begotten to a lively hope, an

* Preached July 19, 1691.

hope that lives. The want of this hope is the despair I mean; and it would not be despair in every subject; but in such a subject as is capable of that hope, and where that hope ought to be, it is despair. As the want of life is death in a man, but not in a stone; when there is not a lively hope terminating upon God, and upon a blessed eternity, and an unseen glory; when there is not such an hope, where that hope hath not its proper place, there lies and lurks this deadly despair. A vacancy of hope towards God and the blessedness of the other state, where it ought to be, and which indeed doth carry much of the essence in it (as we shall have further occasion to note) of the new creature; and it is the very perfection of human nature itself; to wit, to have a soul directed towards God by the power of a vital hope, continually expecting felicity and blessedness from him; I say, the vacancy of it is despair. But that perfection of our nature, regeneration brings in and supplies. "We are begotten again to a lively hope;" as the degeneration, deformity, and depravedness of human nature expels and keeps it out. But it so much belongs to a man as a man, that, as Philo Judæus (who speaks but as such an one) doth fitly enough say, Hope in God is so much of human nature, that he is unworthy to be called a man that is destitute of it. Now that soul is destitute of it that hath no commerce with God, that hath nothing to do with him day by day. Where there is no hope, there is despair Godward, "without God, and without hope." Ephes. ii. 12. You (whoever it be) that transact all your affairs without God, have nothing to do with God from morning to night, you have no hope; none of this vital hope, this living hope, by which we are to be saved. Do you hope in God, when you have nothing to do with him, when you mind him not, when no thought of him comes into your heart?

I pray, let none so deceive themselves as to think that there is no such thing as despair when they feel not the flames of hell in their souls; for, sure a lethargy may be as mortal as a burning fever; when there is such a stupidity upon the soul, such a mindlessness of God, that there is in reference to him neither fear nor hope. And as our present state is, even in reference to the business of salvation, there cannot be hope but there must be fear too; there is no such hope as to exclude fear in the present state, nor such fear as to exclude hope. But here is the dismal state of the case, as to the most, that they have neither hope nor fear

in reference to the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting concerns; wherever they are, they have no thoughts of such matters; there is neither hope nor fear. And where, then, is that which should save you? If we are indeed to be saved by hope, we are lost by the vacancy of it, and when there is no such thing as fear also. But doth such a supine neglectfulness and ossitancy, with reference to the concerns of our souls and our everlasting state, agree with the common notion of us all; that this present state is but a state of probation and preparation, in reference to a final and eternal state? Is it so indeed? And have we, in reference to that final state, neither hope nor fear? What is like to be the issue of this? But,

Inference 2. We again infer, that the happiness of a Christian is future; for it is the object of hope,—that hope which is to have a continual influence upon his salvation, now the object of hope is somewhat future and unseen; somewhat that lies out of sight as yet. "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;" as the following words of the text shew us. Understand and consider aright then, the state of one that is a Christian indeed. He is one that hath his best and supreme good lying in futurity, and out of sight. He lives by that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. He is one that hath not his good things here. Luke xvi. 25. This is a true account of his state; his portion is not in this life. Psalm xvi. 1. His estate lies in reversion; it is somewhat expected, somewhat looked for; he takes hold of it by that hope which is cast, "as an anchor of the soul, within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20.) whither Jesus, the forerunner, for us entered;" and so his title is sure, for there is such an one gone before, who, having procured, is thereupon gone to take possession of his inheritance for him.

Then, if you are to make an estimate or judgment of the condition of a Christian, a saint, a child of God, do not judge of it by present appearances, and the external state of his present case, while he is here in this world; so it may be an appearance, not only mean, but frightful;—you may behold him not only a despised one, but an hated one, persecuted, trodden under foot by an injurious, angry world;—angry for this, that he seems not to have his satisfaction in the same things that they have, but to be aiming at

somewhat else above and beyond them. This is displeasing; this is ungrateful. The world doth not understand such a sort of men: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!—therefore the world knoweth us not, (1 John iii. 1.) because it knew him not." It knows nothing at all of this race, neither father, nor children. The world knows nothing of them; it cannot tell how to form an idea, a distinct notion, of this sort of men, that are so descended, and of such a parentage. They are men of another genius, another spirit, another kind of design. The tendency of their course is another way, and they know not what to make of it; "therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not;" and because it doth not know, it hates. And all the effects of hatred many times appear mighty conspicuous towards that sort of men; and would do more, it is likely, if they did appear more like themselves, and did more plainly avow their unrelatedness to this world, and their relation to, and expectations from an upper world, an higher world. But as it is, as the divine nature that is in them doth more or less speak forth, and shew itself, so it stirs the indignation of a deserted forsaken world against them, in whom that nature is and doth appear. And then, by this means, they come to be counted the scum and off-scouring of all things.

Therefore their condition is not to be judged of by such measures as these; do not judge of the *bonum*, the *optabile*, what is good, and what is desirable in the state of a sincere living Christian, by these present appearances, that lie under common view, as now he is a mean, despised, hated thing; but consider him in that state which his hopes do aim at and tend to, and then you will behold him arrayed with the garments of salvation; for it is the hope of salvation that aids him, animates him, and carries him through his course, and which finally will actually save him. Behold him as he is crowned with a diadem of glory, and associated with that blessed community of saved ones, as one that comes to bear his part in adorning the triumphs of his great and glorious Lord and Redeemer, in that day when he shall appear to be "admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe;" because the gospel testimony was received among them in the proper day and season thereof. And judge now what it is to be a Christian; take your measures of the state of a Christian by

what he hopes for; not by what he is, but what he reasonably and groundedly hopes to be. And again,

Inference 3. The futurities of a Christian are far more considerable than all the present enjoyments of this world. "We are saved by hope;" and, for this world, it is well if we can be saved from it; but we are never to expect being saved by it; but by the hope of these great futurities we are saved. Then, certainly, a Christian's futurities are far more considerable, and far more eligible, than all present worldly enjoyments whatsoever. And you may judge so by this, that such an one is inspired from heaven itself with such an hope as this, that makes him neglect all this earth, and breathe and tend continually upwards. That is a true judgment which proceeds from the directions and operations of the Divine Spirit. He that hath made them hope hath made them thus judge; (for they do not hope irrationally or brutishly,) that the enjoyments of this world are not comparable to the expectations of believers in reference to the other world. You may trust to that judgment which is made in the virtue, and by the special direction of his Spirit, who is the God of hope: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," as the apostle's expression is, Rom. xv. 13.

Therefore, if you would make a judgment in this case, which is the most desirable thing, a large, full, and opulent portion here in this world, or "an inheritance with the saints in light," guide your judgment, (if you cannot judge by an immediate light of your own,) by theirs, who may best be presumed to have light in this matter; to wit, that have this divine principle put into them by God himself, which looks with neglect upon all present things, and waving and overlooking them, turns away from them, and tends its eye and course forwards towards an unseen glory and felicity elsewhere. We do commonly take that as likely to be true, which the wisest and most judicious commonly agree in. Now this is the agreed sense of all the children of God in all times and ages: and thereupon they are carried, according to judgment and choice, to wave a present portion and felicity in this world, and seek it elsewhere; we may certainly conclude, that the heavenly felicity, which is hoped for by this sort of men, is every way more considerable, eligible, and desirable, than the best worldly portion that can be had here on earth. But it is a great matter when we assent to this, (which we shall do notionally, as soon as we hear it notionally,) to have

also the living sense thereof wrought into our souls, so as to be able to say, I not only know it to be so, but I feel it to be so. But again, further,

Inference 4. We may infer that hope is the life of all true and serious religion. If there be any such thing as living Christianity among us, hope is the life of it. You will easily apprehend, that religion is the way to felicity, the means to the blessed end. But what kind of religion must it be? Not dead religion, but living; and there can be no living religion but what is animated by hope, and by the hope of that very end, to which it is itself in a tendency. The religion of the present state is nothing else but inchoate felicity; it is heaven begun; it is a coming to God, and tending towards him. It is one and the same principle by which any thing doth move and rest. The same nature which is the principle of motion and of rest. If religion be a principle of motion to carry us unto God, it will be a principle of rest, to give us the actual repose and satisfaction and solace of soul, that being in him consists in. But this must be living religion, and not dead. And there can be no life in it but as it is continually inspired by hope.

Religion being an aiming at God, a tendency towards God, to wit, the religion of the way; the religion of the present state; it must continually be influenced by such an apprehension as this, that he is willing to be a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. And it is this faith that is the immediate foundation of hope. I hope I shall find him the rewarder of my soul. I hope my labour in the Lord will not be in vain. This is that that doth inspirit religion, and make it a living thing. There is indeed a religion in the world that hath no life in it, that lies all in empty shew, and form, and external appearance. But, if there be life in it, hope is the life of it. I hope I shall reach a blessed end at last in this way. The business of religion is to seek God; in seeking him I hope that I shall find him; I find life, and satisfaction, and felicity, and eternal blessedness in him. This hope is the soul of religion, and the very life of it.

And you ought to consider it so; that, accordingly, the several parts of your religion may be animated and influenced by it. Those are dull duties, that are not considered as your way to your end. Every such duty as we are now engaged in at this time should be considered thus: this is

part of my way to heaven, part of my way to a blessed eternity; we are now met here with that expectation and hope, that we shall, ere long, be taken up to the "general assembly and church of the first-born; to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. This would make the duties and ordinances of every Lord's day lively things with us, when we are all aiming to take hold, in every such duty, of "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." But if we come together here only to see one another's faces, or to hear the sound of a few empty words, without knowing whither they tend, without minding to what end they serve, or what they aim at, or because we know not how else to spend so many hours of a day that is not allowed for our common labour; we shall make but a flat thing of our religion. But if our religion be a living thing, hope is the end of it, —I hope my way will end in eternal felicity at length; this is my way to God and glory, and to a blessed eternity. And,

Inference 5. You may further learn that all serious religion doth involve and carry in it a design for salvation and eternal blessedness: for we are saved by the hope of this, and there can be no hope of it without the design of it; what we hope for we design for, otherwise our hope is altogether an useless, inactive thing in us. We are only saved by hope, as by hope we are prompted to design salvation, and are made lively and vigorous in the prosecution of that design; which way else should hope save us, but as it engageth to lay a design for salvation, and as it enables us with life and vigour to prosecute that design, as a compassable thing, as a thing that may be brought about, and, by God's gracious vouchsafement, will and shall?

And it is therefore deeply to be considered, that our hope of being saved, and our design for salvation, must measure one another; he that drives no such design through the whole of his abode in this world, he must be looked upon as one of those (of whom I have told you before) that hath no hope in him; no living hope; was never begotten to a lively hope. If he have a living hope in him of a final felicity in God, that will continually prompt him to design, and to prosecute his design with strength and vigour, for a blessed and a glorious eternity. And I pray let us make our reflexion seriously upon this, as in the sight and presence of God. Do we carry it from day to day as those that are striving a design for salvation and eternal glory?

As those that are going to heaven? As candidates of eternal heavenly felicity? Do we live like such? Then should we be every day on the wing, reaching forth (as it is the nature of hope to do) with fervent, raised, aspirings towards the heavenly state. We that have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, (as it is spoken in the immediate foregoing verse in this context,) waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body; for we are saved by hope, so the words are connected. We are saved by the hope of that very state, wherein we are to be owned openly of God, as his children; which is here called the adoption.

There was among the Romans a double adoption; there was a private adoption; that is, the foundations were laid by some private act. But afterwards it came to be declared *in foro,* and to be enrolled, that such an one did adopt such an one, to be his son. And, it is in reference to this latter sort of adoption, or the complement and solemnization of it, that we are said to wait for the adoption; that is, the children of God, they that were adopted before; fundamentally they yet wait for the solemnization of that adoption, when the manifestation shall be of the sons of God, when it shall be declared before angels and men, as it will, in the judgment of the great day, These I take for my sons and adopted ones; and it is by the hope of this we are saved, for we are saved by hope, as immediately there followeth. And I say, that this hope can no otherwise save them, than as it doth continually influence a design of that salvation. But if our great business here in this world be from day to day nothing else but to feed upon the dust of the earth, and to please and indulge self, and the flesh; if this be the design we are daily striving, we have none of this hope that saves souls; where that hope is, a correspondent design cannot but be. The religion of such involves and carries in it a continual design for the blessedness of the heavenly state: therefore nothing can be more incongruous and absurd, than to keep up a shew and face of religion, while yet the hearts of men, if they will but reflect are conscious to themselves of no such design: they are not aiming at God, or at blessedness in God; the possessing of a future felicity, and glory in him, and with him. They cannot justly and truly pretend to such a thing. Then (I say) is a course of religion the greatest absurdity in the world; to do in a continued course those actions that have only reference unto such an end, and never to refer to that

end. To be religious without design, to wit, the proper design of religion, (which is felicity,) nothing can be more absurd.

Objection. But it may be said, how is it possible that a man should be religious without design? A man doth not act in religion, but it must be done voluntary; and if it be done voluntary, it must be done for an end, so there can be no such thing (you will say) as keeping up a course of religion, without a design.

Answer. Very true, indeed, there could be no such thing as keeping up a course of religion, without a design; but that is not the matter I speak of, a design in general. A man cannot do a series of merely human actions without some design or other, or simply without any design; but when the actions that make up a course of religion are done, we cut this design for the proper end of religion. Here lies the absurdity and incongruity that I now state, to tear a series and course of actions from their proper end, and not refer them to that end, this is most irrational trifling. As if, when all the other actions of a man's life are done for a certain determinate end only in the great business of religion, he plays the fool, he doth the thing, but never minds the end; keeps such days as these; comes to church; attends upon the public solemnities of God's worship; but never thinks of heaven, never minds eternal glory, as the thing in this way to be designed for. And so his religion, and the duties of it, bear no proportion to his end, to that end that they were made for. There is a two-fold design driven by religion, or by carrying on a course of religion by very different sorts of men. That is a design for this world, and a design for the world to come: some are religious only with a design for this world; to wit, that I may carry it fair with men in this world, or with that sort of men which I think fittest, and have some inducements which lead me to associate with, to apply myself to them, and to have their good opinion, and have a good reputation among them; I am willing, therefore, to be as they are, and to do as they do; here is a design for this world driven in religion, and the actions and duties of it; not (it may be) to gain; but there may be many worldly designs, besides that of gain; worldly repute and credit among those whose opinion I most esteem, and put a value upon, and to whom, therefore, in such a way, I think to approve and recommend myself.

But there is also a design driven in religion for the world

to come. And this is the true and proper design of religion. And where the former only is designed, we can hardly ever comprehend in our thoughts a more horrid frightful case; when a man is doing the great sacred acts of religion, without a design for their proper end, and in mere subserviency to some mean and inferior design, by how much the less that is, or the lower the design is, or by how much the less is to be got by it, so much is religion the lower debased; being thereby put into a subserviency to that which, it may be, shall be worth nothing to men; that I shall never gain by one way or other: and yet, I choose to do acts of religion; or to do these, and not take other acts thereof; or, to do these I do in this or that form; and do all in accommodation to some secular purpose, and design: but the eternal purposes of religion are forgotten, neglected, and never thought of by me. This is to prostitute the most sacred, venerable thing imaginable, (religion,) to the meanest and most despicable end.

How is this to be answered for, or wherein can we possibly conceive a more horrid sort of sacrilege than this? The acts of religion have a sacrednesss in them; but I aliene them from their proper end. This I do not, in order to the serving of God; not in order to the saving of my soul; or not in reference to an eternal state; but I do it to please my own present humour, or my friend's humour. Is this that indeed which we will resolve our religion into? Such trifling with religion is that, which will be dearly accounted for at the last day. To do that which we ought to do for pleasing and glorifying of God, and saving our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus, we cannot tell why, or for what reason, will come to a fearful reckoning at last. We ought to bethink ourselves at all such times, when we are thus assembled; What am I here to day for? Why did I come to this place this morning? Why did I take upon me to make one, and bear a part in a Christian religious assembly? Did I do it as one that hoped for salvation, and expected eternal life in this way? Was it that I might draw so much nearer to God, and be so much the more acquainted with him, and fitted for that state which I profess to hope for? But again,

Inference 6. We may further learn, that there is a very great sagacity belonging to the new creature, and the regenerate state; we are saved by hope; this imports the new creature, those that are born of God in order to eternal life, to be a very sagacious sort of creatures. The new

creature is a very foreseeing creature; it is in this, eminently distinguished from other creatures, even of the same rank and order in God's creation; to wit, merely human creatures: whereas others look merely, or only, to the present, here is a strange foresight in this sort of creature that is born of God, by which it eyeth, and looketh towards salvation, and eternal blessedness. As soon as it is born, "It is begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance reserved in heaven for it." 1 Peter i. 3. The new creature hath an hope belonging to its essence; as soon as it begins to be, and breathe, it begins to hope. It is born to the hope of immortality and eternal life.

We ought to consider this, and a great judgment is to be made of our own state, by what we find instilled into ourselves of that spiritual sagacity and foresight. There are many that are apt to be foreseeing, (and value themselves greatly upon it) of temporary events, the probability of such and such events, and love to discourse and reason thereupon; as politicians, or as prophets, they can value themselves greatly upon such foresight; but here is the true foresight that sees into eternity.

That is the best, and clearest, and strongest sight that can see furthest; that overlooks (it may be) the concernments of to-morrow, of this year and the next, within the bounds and compass of time; yea, looks beyond all time, penetrates into eternity, beholds the judgment seat, the Judge sat, the books opened, the dead raised, and men disposed severally to their eternal states. The new creature, that divine birth, which fetcheth its original immediately from God, this is its sagacity; with such sagacity and foresight it is endowed. "We are saved by hope," we have an hope by which we expect to be saved, which penetrates into the unseen futurities of an everlasting state. And,

Inference 7. We may hereupon conclude too, That there is a certain generosity, a nobleness, a greatness of mind that doth belong unto a regenerate person. The new creature, one that is born of God, by which he is borne up above all this world, tramples upon it, scorns its smiles, smiles at its frowns and scorns, despiseth its threats and terrors, looks still beyond it and above it. What is all this world to me? A shadow, a despicable vanity! My great concernments lie above in a superior world, in a remoter world. This is generous and great. Oh! saith one that is

born of God, I cannot live at the common rate, I cannot live upon this country fare, I must fetch in all the provisions I live by, from day to day, from heaven; eat heavenly food, and drink heavenly drink, such meat and such drink as the world affords not; for such a prepossession, and such a pre-occupation, there is by hope of the felicity of heaven, and of the heavenly state. They do support this frail mortal life as others do; but they have another life that is to be supported in another way, and by other means; and in reference to which they find an unsuitableness in all things under the sun, as we should in gravel for our meat, and puddle for our drink; so that if you ask such an one, what he lives by, as to the maintenance of that nobler life that is in him, he will answer, by hope.

You may possibly (some of you) have heard and read of a great Prince and General, who, upon a conquest, dispensing great largesses among his Soldiers, was asked, And what, Sir, do you reserve for yourself? Why hope, saith he. I, for my part, live upon hope. I give away all that I have now got, and live upon the hope of more. This is the generosity and nobleness of mind that is in-wrought into a regenerate person, When he becomes so, he despiseth all things under the sun as a portion, as a final terminative good, and lives upon hope. And this we must come to, if ever we come to know what it is to be Christians. It is too little understood (I am afraid to this day) what it is to be a Christian, though we have long borne that name. Are not we told, they are a sort of people called out of the world? "They are not of this world," (saith our blessed Lord, in that concluding solemn prayer of his, when he was going out of the world,) "even as I am not of this world." John xvii. 16. Oh, what an horrid thing would it be to contradict our blessed Lord, in the sense of our own hearts! He saith, "they are not of this world;" but here is one answering, Aye, Lord, but I am of this world; one with this world, united to it: I savour the things of the world, as the men of the world do; I choose with them, and enjoy with them: a fearful thing from the sense of our hearts, to contradict our blessed Lord! to have him say, "They that are mine are not of this world, as I am not of this world;" and we be forced to say, concerning ourselves, Yes, but we are of this world, and related to this world more than any other, and savour the things of this world more than any other.

There are sundry other inferences more that I intend

now to go through, but there is one thing for the present, I would shut up with, though I do therein anticipate and prevent myself; that is, only to recommend this one thing to you, as a piece of solemn counsel and serious consideration, that you will labour to get your souls possessed of this principle, and direct it towards its final object; let it reach forth even unto the very last of the object that it is to be taken up about; for this we must know, that there are intermediate objects, and there is that at length which is most finally final. But hope hath its strongest and most powerful influences, as it doth reach furthest, reach into a most glorious eternity; and makes us say within ourselves, I hope to be there ere long. What a wonderful thing would it be, if we could always worship under such an hope! what mighty vigour would it infuse into our religion, to say to every one that meet together in such an assembly: We meet together in hope and expectation of having our eternal abode with that blessed society above, in the mansions of glory that are prepared already in our Father's house! To have this hope live in us, what life would it not transfuse through all our duties, and through the whole course of our religion!

And what a pleasant relish would it give to all our present mercies, such as we have greater occasion, more solemnly to bless God for; when we have matter of praise laid before us, and offered to us, as we have at this day! We have heard of the great success God hath blessed and crowned them with, who have been fighting his battles of late, especially in a neighbouring kingdom. It is a great thing to say, Blessed be God that hath done so much, and I hope will do more, and will enable them to carry on the work further; and I hope beyond all that, that I shall be one of the saved community at last. What spirit and life would that add to our prayer and praise!

And on the other side, what a damp and diminution would it be to all our matter of praise, and to the praisefulness of our spirits, to say, I have heard, indeed, that things have gone pretty well of late in Savoy, in Germany, and greatly well in Ireland; but all this while I have no hope of being saved; I have no hope of things going well with me hereafter: things may go well here, for aught I know, with them to whom I wish well; but I have no hope that things will go well with me for ever, or in an everlasting state. What a damp is this to the great praisefulness of a man's spirit, and what a diminution to the present matter

of his praise! It is an insignificant thing for me to put in my rejoicing with their joy, who are pleased with any such good successes at these; and in the mean time to be forced to say, Alas! there is a dreadful doom hanging over me, and over my soul; I have nothing in me that looks like a principle of the divine life; and yet I am sure that life must be now begun in me, that must be connected with eternal life. A present spiritual death hath no connection with eternal life, it must be a spiritual life, of which this hope (as you have heard) is so great a principle, that shall end in life eternal.

SERMON XXII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I HAVE made some progress in the use, and some instructive inferences I have recommended to you; and more I did intend to add, but I shall now wave them, intending to make all the haste I can to go through what I most principally intended on this subject.

And, that which remains is to direct to the serious and most earnest (in that way which may be the most probable) endeavour of getting this noble principle implanted, cultivated, and improved, amongst us towards this its high and glorious end, our own salvation. And, because (as hath been largely shewn you,) this great principle (Hope) contributes thereunto, both by the influence that it hath in order to the conversion of the unconverted, and by the influence that it hath upon the perseverance of the converted; therefore, the tenour of my discourse herein must be suitable hereunto, and must respect both these sorts of persons; but so as that I do hope each may find their own concern in each part of the following discourse, while yet the several parts may more principally and directly respect the one sort or the other. And,

Direction 1. The direction I shall give you, (and which will certainly concern us all,) is, that we may all more se-

* Preached September 13, 1691.

riously and earnestly mind the great business of our own salvation, and more deeply concern ourselves about it. I am sure such hope can never signify any thing with them, in order to salvation, who are not concerned about their salvation, that mind no such matter. I am very little willing to be much in repetition of any thing that hath been said to you formerly; but, if I would repeat any thing, I can do nothing that is more fit to be reconsidered, than what I told you upon the first inference: that, if hope have such a tendency to our salvation; despair must have a like tendency to our destruction. If souls are to be saved by hope, they are in greatest danger to be lost by despair. I say, what I told you upon that head, to wit, that there are two sorts of despair; a silent, calm, stupid despair, and a strong raging despair.

There are a great many that are in despair about their salvation, who never think they are; and in whom it makes no noise; to wit, that are without any real vivid hope concerning their salvation; and the vacancy of hope, right hope, in a subject to which it belongs is to be called by the name of its contrary, despair. According to the known, and most common agreed rules of reasoning, in such matters; those souls that are dead towards God, and their own eternal concernments, have no hope in God, and are really sunk in despair, and are likely to be lost and perish by it, if mercy do not seasonably mend their case.

And, in what I am now pressing you unto, hope, to get it implanted, and improved to its proper purpose; I would be loath to be mistaken, as if, in pressing to hope, I pressed to security. And indeed I would hardly think that any one that hath the understanding of a man, that will use thought, can be guilty of so gross a mistake; for sure there is the widest and broadest difference imaginable between security and hope. The hope of salvation, of eternal life, and eternal well-being! What? is there any thing in this like security? Such an hope is a positive thing, a real, and great something; security is but a vacuity of fear and care about a man's own concernments; and that is a mere nothing. What? I beseech you, is there no difference between something so great, a something and nothing? Such an hope is a most lively, powerful, active principle, whereso-ever it is; and mightily stirs in the soul, and makes it mightily bestir itself, in the pursuit of its end: security, as it is nothing, so it doth nothing; it puts the soul upon doing nothing, lets it still be dead, and unconverted: care

for being saved who will for them, for their parts they do not. There is no likeness between these two things, security, and such an hope.

But now if I do not prevail with you, as to this first direction, the throwing off security, and minding more seriously, and in good earnest, the concerns of your souls; my labour is lost, and your souls are lost; and if I gain not this first point among you, all that is said and designed is to no purpose. But can any, upon sober consideration, think that it is a likely matter that salvation is so common as the neglect of it is? Or, are men in a likely way to be saved, that so generally disregard any such thing, think of no such matter from day to day, and from year to year? Is that imagination agreeable to scripture calls and warnings? Strive to enter in at the strait gate, that leads to life. Work our your own salvation with fear and trembling. What? Are all such words from the mouth of God, and by his inspired servants, only sown to the wind, thrown among men into empty air?

If we would consider things reasonably, and with sober understandings, nothing would be more obvious to us than to bethink ourselves, that contraries have all their place in the same subject, not in divers: and thus in this case so it must be, so it ought to be; this being a matter of moral consideration, that wherever there ought to be hope, there ought to be fear too; the exigency of the case requiring it. And while matters do yet hang dubiously, (as they will do more or less, with all of us in this region of mortality,) we shall never be past all danger, nor all appearances of it; there will be no more perfection of assurance, than perfection of holiness. Doth the scripture say in vain to us, that we are to be saved by hope? And doth the same scripture, the same word of God, say to us, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Sure there is no repugnancy between these things, but a necessary agreement, a most necessary agreement.

And, as contraries do always exist only in the same subject, so in lower degrees they do always co-exist in it, exist in it together: and therefore, where there is hope, there ought to be fear, in reference and respect to the concernments of our salvation; for we are not to think, that the one of these scriptures doth exantlate the other, and make it lose its force and signify nothing; this being a word given to men in mortal flesh, this divine word that we have in this book, we must know that it concerns men, and is to be

applied to them in accommodation to the state in which they are; and in reference whereunto it is written. And, therefore, the state of none is so desperate as theirs, who, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, have neither hope nor fear; as they that mind it not, have neither the one, nor the other.

And, because of the weight and mighty importance of this thing, I shall insist upon it; and press this a little, before I go further, by some considerations. As,

1. That to be unconcerned about the affairs of our salvation, is continually to stifle a most natural principle; we have no principle, no notion, that is more natural to us, than that we have something about us that cannot die, that is made for eternity, and for another state after this. I cannot now stand to prove to you the mortality of the soul; my subject doth not lead me to it: but it is that we all profess to believe, and which we pretend to believe of ourselves, unless we could disprove it and plainly evince the contrary; and, I would fain know how any man would go about to disprove that he is a creature made for another state after this. How will he prove himself to be nothing but a mortal creature? How will he prove, that let him be never so like a beast, he shall die like a beast too? How will he prove that? And that the ultimate end, which man was made for, is attainable in this earthly state? How will any man go about to prove this? If he would prove himself a beast, the evidence of things will repugn, and fly in his face. It is only not thinking that makes men adventurous in a matter of this import. Oh! how dismal a thing is it, when, instead of the hope of salvation, all that a man hath to relieve himself is, the hope of annihilation, a hope of his running into nothing; that instead of blessedness, he hath no other hope, but only of no being?

But consider (I say) that by this, here is a continual stifling of a most deeply natural principle; for there is no man that would fain abolish the thoughts of that immortal nature he hath about him; but still they will recoil upon him. This spirit that God put into man by his own inspiration, carries with it a secret consciousness of its own immortality; and there can be no disbelief hereof, or opinion of the contrary, that is not conjoined with a great *formido* opposite, a certain misgiving and fear that it will at last prove otherwise; but, in the meantime to own such a principle as that, (as among us it is generally owned,) and yet to have the habitual temper of a man's soul be directly op-

posite thereunto ; to wit, in an unconcernment what shall, and may become of him, in an everlasting state ; this is the most intolerable thing that we can suppose the human nature liable to. A most unsufferable absurdity, that I should have such a fixed apprehension and sentiment about me that I know not how to get rid of, and yet the habitual frame of my mind, and the whole course of my practice, run directly contrary to it. And then,

2. As unconcernedness about our salvation doth oppose this principle in the very nature of man, (than which none is more deeply fundamental ;) so it doth reproach the dignity of the human nature, as well as oppose the light of it. It reproacheth the dignity and honour of the human nature. They are continually throwing contempt upon their own nature, that live unconcernedly about their future state and eternal salvation. If we would but consider this matter seriously, who is there that would not be ashamed to have this written in his forehead, I do not care what becomes of my soul to all eternity ? Who would not be ashamed to carry that character visible to every man ? To proclaim himself one that thinks he is of no greater or nobler allay in the creation of God, than a brute creature ? Whence is there a regret to avow and own such a principle, but only that we think it to be ignominious ? If there be not these explicit thoughts, there is such a secret sense, that it would be an ignominious thing, a reproachful thing.

But how unaccountable is this, that a man should not be ashamed of the thing, and yet he is ashamed of the profession of it ? Men are not ashamed of the thing ; to wit, to be careless of, and unconcerned about, their own souls, and their eternal salvation ; they go from day to day without any suitable regret within themselves for their own carelessness and negligence, and yet they would be ashamed to avow an unconcernedness to all the world. There is no rational account to be given, why men should be ashamed of the profession of such a thing, and yet not be ashamed of the thing itself. To go every day from morning to night, without any care, thought, or concern, what shall become of my soul, as to eternal salvation hereafter ; never to have the soul smite them about this thing, from day to day, and from week to week ; and be ashamed, to feel a loathness in their own minds, to avow infidelity, and profess mere brutality, that I am nothing but a mere brute animal ; how unaccountable is this ?

Indeed, the great iniquity in this matter is this : that

men do not more allow themselves to study and contemplate themselves; that they do not labour to have more reverential thoughts even of the very nature of man; I mean the primitive nature of man. There is nothing indeed more despicable and hateful than corrupt and vicious nature. That precept of that noted heathen, that we reverence ourselves and our own nature, it needs inculcation. And, as to this very particular thing of hope towards God, (with which unconcernedness about our salvation and future felicity it is plain cannot consist,) there have been higher and more raised thoughts about it, and about the nature of man, in reference hereunto, with some from whom, one would little expect it, than is usual among Christians themselves. I cannot but reflect again and again upon that of Philo the Jew, who tells us, that hope towards God is that which doth most properly belong to the nature of man: so, that (as he speaks,) (the *euelpist*,) he that hath this hope easiest and most familiar to him, is only to be counted a man; but the (*dyselpist*,) he that finds an aversion in him to such actings of hope towards God, is scarcely to be counted a man; hardly to be looked upon as one that is partaker of a rational nature; so high was the notion of human nature laid with some such in those days. But now, where there is nothing else but a daily stupid unconcernedness in men about the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting state, there is even among such (though they bear the name of Christians) such a contempt of themselves and such an indignity done to the nature of man, as many that have not been Christians would have been ashamed of. And,

3. Such an unconcernedness about our salvation, it is a continual disobedience to a most natural divine law. We ought to account, that where no other law than that of our own natures is, that yet such do live properly under the obligation of a law; for I beseech you consider, do you think that God is not governor of the rest of the world, as well as he is of Christendom? And how doth he govern reasonable creatures without a law? "They that have not a written law, are a law to themselves," Rom. ii. 14, 15. And Heathens tell us of a *nata* and a *scripta lex*, and where there is not a *scripta* there is a *nata:* a law that is born with us, a law written in our hearts, are expressions common to Cicero, and to the Apostle Paul; and therefore light about this matter in some degree hath been common to men. There is no more deeply natural law upon men, than that of self-preservation; and if the soul of man be

the man, or the chief of man, the principal thing in man, do you think it doth not lie under the obligation of a law to preserve itself, to endeavour to save itself, to keep itself, as far as it can, from being lost and miserable to eternity, since it is capable of eternity? And, therefore consider,

4. That God cannot but be highly provoked, when the authority of this law, of which he hath impressed on the very soul of man and wrought into his nature, is continually violated. Consider it, for he cannot but be highly provoked with it; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" where the apostle's discourse is about natural truth, about those dictates of truth that lie naturally and universally in the minds of men; as the notions concerning God do, that he instanceth in, in what immediately followeth; and concerning right and wrong, even unto men; with which is contempered the obligations that lie upon every man in reference to himself; because the duty we owe to other men is measured by that which we owe to ourselves, the whole law being comprehended in love. And that comprehensive principle being thus given by our Lord himself, to wit, "We are to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, souls, minds, and might; and to love our neighbours as ourselves:" which therefore involves, firstly, and in the highest place, this care for ourselves. And since in the common acknowledgment of all, our souls are our most principal and chief selves, a love to our souls, and care for them, must needs be one of the great principles of natural truth; for the violation whereof the wrath of God is revealed; to wit, against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold this truth in unrighteousness. To have such truths as these, always lying in my mind and soul, and continually to run counter to them, how provoking is it?

When I consider the law of nature as God's law, and that by which he governs that part of the world which hath no other law, and that the obligation thereof is perpetual and eternal, and can cease no where; to be guilty of continual violations of this, is to tear the foundations of the divine government. And therefore it is not strange that wrath should be revealed from heaven against men, upon such an account; that they hold such truths in unrighteousness, and stifle and counteract it, through the whole of their course, from day to day. And to bring this down to our

own particular cases and concernments: to wit, if a man arise in the morning, and all his care for the following day is, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and what shall I put on, and how shall I make a gainful bargain for this world, to advance my estate, and the like? and no proportionable care or concernment is taken for his soul, or its salvation, all the day. This (I say) is to live in a continual violation of one of the most deeply fundamental laws of his own nature, for which the wrath of God is provoked and revealed against men, for such ungodliness. There doth not need a gospel to bring such men under a doom, but it doth bring them under a heavier doom, being superadded. That gospel wherein life and immortality are brought to light, to wit, into a closer and brighter light; that is, whereas the light of the Pagan Gentile world is but a twilight, a dubious light, in comparison of that which we have in the gospel, concerning the future eternal states of men; therefore this super-addition must heightens men's doom. And then again,

5. This is to be considered too, That in such an unconcernedness about our salvation, we do not only offend against the authority of the divine law; but against the goodness and kindness of it, which is an unspeakably higher and more aggravated offence. Oh! that this might but enter into our souls to consider how much there is of good will towards men in laying upon them the obligation of such a law, which as it was first written in our own nature, so it is over and over, and more expressly written again in his word! "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." A law in various forms and expressions so often repeated. Oh! that it might be considered, how much there is of kindness and benignity in it towards them, whom it doth so much concern! How much there is of good will and favourable propensions expressed, when the primary design of the divine law is to bring us to be happy creatures; that we should have laws laid upon us to be happy. This is the purport of the whole, as if the merciful lawgiver should but speak this sense, (as indeed he hath spoken in his word; often and often, over and over; most fully,) Oh! be kind to yourselves! do not give up yourselves to perish. You have intelligent, immortal spirits about you, that are capable of the same felicity with angels, those glorious creatures above. Do not abandon these spirits of yours unto

remediless ruin, in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of your souls! do not plunge and sink them into an endless, and incurable misery!

We are taught to account, that the very patience that God doth exercise towards men hath this kind design with it, that they might be saved. See his expostulations with sinners about this: "Despiseth thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works?" Rom. ii. 4, 5. The patience of God is intimated to have generally that aptitude in itself to induce men to consider and take up thoughts of returning; and most expressly, when the gospel commenteth upon it, and tells men of its design. Why was not thy careless soul, that heard the gospel the last Lord's day, cut off before this Lord's day? Why? the patience of God is leading it to repentance: so we are directly instructed to interpret. "My brethren, (saith that other Apostle,) count the long suffering of God salvation." 2 Peter iii. 15. Do you put that construction and sense upon it? Make that interpretation to yourselves, Why am I spared? I have been careless of God and my own soul so long, year after year, why am I spared? The Apostle doth teach you to reckon, and make an estimate, why it is, what you are to count it is for; "Count that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation;" 2 Peter iii. 15. to wit, that he is designing your salvation in all this indulgence, and sparing mercy, that he exerciseth towards you. And it is highly aggravated guilt, when there is not only a continual resistance of the authority, but an offending constantly against the kindness of a divine constitution. And,

6. You ought to consider, You are nor your own. And though every one is obliged to intend, with the greatest earnestness, the salvation of his own soul, yet he is not to do it principally and supremely as his own; for God's interest is higher, and more principal in us, than ours can be in ourselves. And therefore, whereas we have a trust incumbent upon us from God, about ourselves, and the affairs of our own souls, he hath required us (though he be our supreme keeper) to keep ourselves, to keep our own hearts with all diligence. Though our Lord Jesus Christ be our supreme Saviour, our great Saviour by office, yet we are

required to save ourselves. Though God in Christ is our supreme Ruler, yet we are told too, that "he that hath not rule over his own spirit, is as a city broken down, and without walls." We have, by divine charge and command, a care incumbent upon us about our own selves, about our own souls; but he is our owner, we are not our own owners.

It is a most horrid thing, when men will not be brought to know their owner. "The ox knoweth his owner." Isa. i. 3. And what? Will not man know his owner? Will not these reasonable intelligent souls of ours know their owner, to whom they belong, who he is that styles himself the God of spirits, even of the spirits of all flesh? So that our having spirits in flesh, embodied spirits, is no diminution to his interest in us, and detracts nothing of it. When these spirits of ours are sunk into flesh, yet he is the God of the spirits of all flesh: they are his, he is the God of them. Then are we to consider besides, that inferior, secondary, subordinate interest that we have in ourselves, and our own souls; we are (I say) to consider God's superior interest in them, whose creatures we are. Then they who live in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of their souls, what answer will they be able to make to the most high God, when he comes to demand of them; "What have you done with my creature that I put under your care, in so great a measure? I trusted thee with the keeping and care of a soul, an immortal soul, an intelligent spiritual being, stamped with my own natural image. I gave thee a soul capable of loving me, capable of being finally happy in me, capable of being, throughout an eternity, employed in the adoration and love of the eternal God. I gave thee such a soul, what hast thou done with it? What! Hast thou made that soul all the time it dwelt in that body, only a drudge to vanity, only to serve as a slave to sensual and brutish inclination?"

God was to have eternal honour from those souls of ours, by our eternal love and adoration and praises of him, and joining with the glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect in these exercises. And when the wretched creature comes to give an account to God, as he must do; "Why hast thou robbed me of the eternal honour, glory, and praise that is due to me from this creature of mine? Why, instead of taking that way, by which it might be associated with the glorious inhabitants in heaven, hast thou taken that

way by which it must come to herd itself with devils, and go to be employed an eternity, in cursing and blaspheming its Maker? Why hast thou thus used a soul which I gave thee, who am the Father of spirits? Was that soul of thine, while it dwelt in a body of flesh, capable of nothing but gratifying and pleasing brutish desires? capable of no higher thoughts than what are suitable to the body, to eat and drink, and be clothed with? Was it capable of no thoughts of God? No thought of a future felicity? Why hath that soul been so injuriously, so abusively treated? I must have an account of my own creature, that should have honoured me, by the eternal love and fruition of me."

Sure these considerations should awaken us a little to that which I first recommended to you by way of direction, that we may, through the grace of God, agree in a resolution, more to mind the concernments of our salvation, than we hitherto have. It may be, a great many will think themselves very innocent as to this matter, and not apprehend that there needs so much care about their souls, and eternal concerns; but is not that to make our own imaginations superior to the determinations of God's express word? Doth that look as if he thought such a matter could be overcome, when he bids us, (as you have heard,) "Strive (the word signifies, be in agonies) to enter in at the strait gate." When any in that but now mentioned scripture, have it made as the distinguishing character between them that shall finally be saved, and them that perish; that the one sort do, by patient continuance in well doing, "seek for glory, honour, and immortality," till they actually have eternal life: and the other sort "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," are contentious against the truth; and therefore are to expect nothing but "indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish," for ever.

And is it not a very strange thing, that about inferior ends, men should think themselves concerned, and obliged to use very great diligence; and every man is praised and commended among his neighbours, as he bears the character of a diligent man, an industrious man in his business? But that in reference to our last end, the universal end, the end of ends, that men should allow themselves in an universal carelessness and neglect, when every thing is greater as it approacheth nearer to the last end. There is a subordination of ends, but as any end comes nearer to the last, so it is greater, and the last, greatest of all. Now that men

should think it very reasonable to be very careful to get estates, to preserve their lives, and live well in the world, and yet think it reasonable to be negligent how they shall live for ever; what inconsistencies are these! There wants nothing but communing with ourselves, to make us apprehend, and understand this, and to make ourselves uneasy to ourselves, till we find a redress. And this word would be an everlasting witness against us, if we should not depart now with a resolution (in dependance on the grace of God) more to mind the concernments of our salvation than ever we have done.

SERMON XXIII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I SHALL now proceed in giving you further directions for the getting this noble principle cultivated and improved. And to that end, in the next place,

Direction 2. We should labour to extend our hope to its highest and utmost object, its supreme and ultimate object. According as we stretch it further, it works more, and it becomes so much the more a lively and potent thing in us. And do I need to tell what its supreme and ultimate object is? Our best good must be our highest hope, and you can be in no doubt what that is. "And now (Lord) what wait I for? my hope is in thee." Psalm xxxix. 7. "Why art thou cast down, oh! my soul, why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." Psalm xlii. 5, 11. and xliii. 5. He must be to us, in respect of our hope, (as in respect of our choice, and love, and delight,) our only one. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee." Psalm lxxiii. 25. This is plain and out of question, God is to be our highest hope.

But concerning this, we are to note further, That it is God, as he is, most perfectly to be enjoyed in the most perfect state, that is to be the object of our hope: some

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shadow of which truth was in the mind of that noted philosopher, when he speaks of felicity, as that which is to be enjoyed in the most perfect state of life. But it is that which we are most deeply to consider, when we design God for the great object of our hope. It must be as he is to be enjoyed most perfectly, to wit, in the best and most perfect state. It is plain that that state is here referred to in this context, and in the text itself, if you will judge its reference by the context. Look to the words that do immediately precede; see whither their aspirings do aim and tend. "We who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." The hope of the final felicity and blessedness of that state, when there should be a perfect redemption of the body. It is an hope of felicity, which will be in its perfection, after being raised from the dead.

And this the Apostle, by another significant name, calls the adoption; to wit, the solemn manifestation of the sons of God, as was the expression a little above, and as is intimated in another place. "Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John iii. 1. Our sonship, and the glory and dignity of our adopted state, is not yet displayed or discovered what it is; but it shall be; and the time is coming when it shall: so that the like thing is intimated here, as did obtain among the Romans, to wit, that adoptions were with them twofold. There was a private adoption that was preparatory, and leading to a following public one. Such an one doth first in private pitch upon such a person as he adopts for his own son, and afterwards there is a public notification thereof *in foro;* here it was declared with public solemnity. And it is in this latter sense, and in accommodation thereunto, that this perfect state of the sons of God is called the adoption.

And as we are to take heed lest any temporary or terrene thing should be designed by us, as the main and terminative object of our hope; so that that which is in its kind, higher and better, and most noble and excellent, we must take heed lest itself be made the final term of our hope, in any state of imperfection, that things even of that kind do yet lie under. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are miserable creatures," 1 Cor. xv. 19. Our hope must shoot forward into another state, we must cast

anchor into that which is within the vail. Heb. vi. 19. Even this anchor of hope. And again,

Direction 3. We must labour to have our minds well informed concerning that state which our hope is finally to terminate upon; not to content ourselves with a confused general idea of some great felicity hereafter, in another world, and after this life; but we must labour, as distinctly as we can, to apprehend what it is, and wherein it consists and lies; for our hope will be in its operations proportionably lively and vigorous, as our apprehensions concerning its objects are distinct and clear; our souls cannot be attracted, and drawn, and enlivened, and raised, by obscure and shadowy apprehensions only of that which we make its final object. And we are not in greater danger of wronging ourselves in any thing more than here, and about this matter.

The generality of men, the generality of them that live under the gospel, and that call themselves Christians; oh, how little is understood among them of the truly Christian hope! The apostle prayeth for his Christian Ephesians, that they might know the hope of their calling; that they might understand what they are to hope for, what they are called to, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that that might be understood. Men of carnal minds, they are apt accordingly to form the notion of all things, and where there is yet a prevailing carnality, even under the gospel men do take their measures of future felicity and misery, according to what notions they have of perfect good and evil; and their notions of present good and evil they are taken only from the dictates of sense. Good and evil are estimated by us according to their accommodations or dis-accommodations to flesh and sense; that is taken for good which is grateful to carnal sense; and that for evil that is ungrateful to it. And no higher are they wont to go; but what would be good or evil to an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, herein they little concern themselves for the most part.

And hence are the notions too common even among Christians of Mahometan Paradises hereafter, or of Paganish Elysiums; indeed usually they go no further, when they are forming their notions of what is meant by salvation, than only to think of the privitive part, and by that privitive part, they mean only being freed from that which they think would be tormenting to the flesh; and because

the scripture doth make use of such phrases and forms of speech for our help, therefore are we wont to abuse them to our hurt, and to the depraving and narrowing of our minds and understandings touching these things; all the salvation that the most concern themselves about is, to be freed from fire and brimstone, that they think will torment the flesh; and the apprehension is dreadful, when they are told of such a state of torment as eternal and everlasting; but how much the more the mind and spirit of a man is a greater, and nobler, and more excellent thing than a little animated clay that he carries about with him, so much the more must the good and evil of the future state, which is accommodate to the mind and spirit, be greater and higher than any thing that flesh is capable of, in point either of enjoyment or suffering.

And it ought to be considered, that, whereas the happiness of an intelligent creature can only be in the fruition of God; I say it ought deeply to be considered, what it is to all eternity, to lose this enjoyment, and to be cut off from him: and this is the greatest of your salvation, to be saved from that misery which must of all things be most tormenting to an intelligent mind and spirit; to wit, I am cut off everlastingly from the enjoyment of that highest and best good whereof I was capable; I was capable of it, and have lost it.

Here is the sting and the fire of hell, its hottest fervour, and by this it is, that the soul must be the everlasting tormentor itself. This is it that gives the ground for those *(morsus)* bitings, wounds, and gnawings of the worm that never dies. Oh, that I should debase a mind, a spirit; so noble a thing, so excellent a thing; to a capacity only of converse with earthly things, and thereby to lose for ever the enjoyment of the blessed God, as having lost my capacity for it, stifled it myself, and therewith lost my interest in it: and so as that thereupon divine justice might do an equal thing, and a becoming thing, and that God might do like himself, as became himself; I should therefore hear from him, "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" Go, accursed creature, into the state which thou choosest.

A salvation from such misery as this, you must labour distinctly to understand, to be the great object of your hope. I hope through the grace of God I shall be saved from this, from ever having things brought to this sad and forlorn pass with me. And so by salvation, though it

sound privative, yet is chiefly meant that which is most highly positive; and lest we should mistake sometimes, we find this positive added in express terms, "salvation by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." 2 Tim. ii. 10.

This (I say) we must labour to understand distinctly, that so our hope may operate strongly and vigorously, as it will according to the apprehension that we have of the object of it; when this comes to be distinctly understood, (inasmuch as the way of the Spirit's working upon the minds and souls of men is suitable to their own intelligent and rational nature;) the life and vigour that Spirit doth exert, and put forth in this way upon the souls of men, it is so much the higher, and so much the more efficacious, by how much the apprehensions are clearer about the things in which I hope, or for which I hope.

When once this is understood, then will the soul say, (if once it be reduced to a capacity of acting like itself; to wit, like an intelligent thing,) What? Shall I for a trifle lose so great an hope? Then the gospel looks big, and appears great in our view, and what? Shall I lose all this? All this glory, all this felicity, and all that fulness of joy that is to be eternal, for a trifle? for the gratifying my own lust, or pleasing my own fancy, or the fancy of a friend, as he calls himself? But he is, indeed, my greatest enemy, as I am in truth the greatest enemy to myself, while I am apt to be imposed upon by such delusive appearances and semblances of things, against my own good and interest. Shall I for the pleasure of a debauch in company, as vain as I can be, ruin so great an hope as this? "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself as God is pure." But then also,

Direction 4. You must take this further direction, to wit, when you have got the notion in any measure competently clear, concerning the state of salvation, the felicity and glory of the future state, then labour most firmly and stedfastly to believe it. You must have a right notion of it first, else you believe you know not what. But let me have never so distinct a notion of the best and most delectable state that can be thought of, it never affects me, nor can rationally, unless I believe it to be a reality. The most pleasing ideas cannot draw forth rational endeavours, unless I be possessed with the apprehension, that it is a real attainable good that I am to act for.

Therefore, to that purpose, consider, I pray you, what the apostle gives us of the notion of that faith which is to

be indeed immediately fundamental of our hope, Heb. xi. 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; if one have never so clear a notion of the most delectable state that it is possible for any one to form and conceive in his own mind, and he doth not look upon this as substantial, as an actual substance, it cannot affect him, it cannot attract him, and draw forth the strength and vigour of his soul in a pursuit after it: therefore, here the work of faith comes in, and that is to substantiate, to be to us the very substance of that which we are to hope for, and to be the evidence of that which yet we do not see; and how could faith do this? Why truly even by that which is intrinsical and natural to it; reliance upon his testimony whom we believe. Human faith is a reliance upon an human testimony; divine faith is a reliance on a divine testimony. I take the word of God about the truth of that I have not seen with my own eyes; and his word representing to me a lovely, pleasant, amiable object hereafter, perfectly to be enjoyed; believing the revelation to be true, I thereupon hope for the thing revealed.

As suppose an overture were made to any of you of making a purchase of an estate in lands where you have not been, or which you do not know; it may be you may have some friend or other that hath been there, and that can give a true and distinct description, and tell you how all things lie; he tells you how very commodious and pleasant a seat there is, or may easily be had; why according as you believe, or disbelieve this man's report, this testimony of his, so is your hope of doing well, and living happily in such a place, lively or not lively, vivid or faint and languid; according (I say) as you believe him, or do not believe him, you having not seen the thing with your own eyes.

This is the case here, God hath told us how it is above, in that state where we have not been, what is to be enjoyed there, what our employments are to be, what our company, and what our state every way. Saith the considering soul, It is true, I have not been in the third heavens, I do not know the order of things there by any experience of my own; but I believe in him that hath told me this; I know he can have no design to deceive me; what can he get by imposing on a worm? When he hath made such a discovery and sworn to it; As I live, so and so it is, and so it shall be. By these two immutable things I apprehend it to be impossible for God to lie: therefore here is strong

consolation for them to fly to for refuge, who have this hope set before them. Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.

But how much another thing is that faith which thus relies upon, and resolves itself into the authority of the divine word, over-awing the soul into an entire acquiescence in the truth of it, and so as to still and silence all abmurmurations and mutterings to the contrary: I dare not think otherwise but that thus it is. How much more (I say) another thing is this faith which so substantiates its object in this way and method, from that which vulgarly goes under the name of faith among us? The common opinion that men have, that there is a world to come, and so and so men may enjoy, or suffer in that other world, that is a mere traditional belief of these things, without ever considering the true and proper grounds why we admit any such belief into our minds and hearts at all; but we believe, because such and such have so told us. It is the common belief, all the people of our country were of this mind, all our forefathers were of this mind; but God, and the authority of his revelation comes not into the case, never falls into consideration at all.

And this faith as it is groundless, so it is fruitless; for the ground of faith, and the efficacy of it, measure one another; faith is always proportionably efficacious as it is grounded well and strongly; that which depends upon nothing doth nothing, effects nothing. It is very plain, that for this common faith which men have about a future state, and which is nothing else but opinion, mere opinion, and nothing more; it effects nothing, operates nothing, it leaves men's hearts the same; and accordingly the course of their practice is the same too, as if they were of quite a contrary belief. What a strange faith is that which, instead of power and efficacy, for the forming of the heart and governing the life, is just the same thing with infidelity, not distinguishable from infidelity; but in point of efficacy, faith and infidelity are the same? This man's heart is as terrene as it would have been if he had been of no such belief, or of a quite contrary belief: and his practice as loose and irregular, having as little tendency in it towards the attainment of such a blessed state as he pretends to believe.

Pagans have seemed to have higher thought of faith than we have. Cicero tells us that among them (the Romans) there were shrines and temples dedicated to faith, and hope, as being certain tokens that God did dwell in

those minds where these are: so he speaks of them; whereupon they dedicated temples to them. When in those minds faith and hope did dwell, they looked upon these as certain evidences that God did dwell in those minds. But I beseech you, what argument is there to be taken from the faith and hope of these great futurities that are commonly pretended to among us, that God dwells in these minds? What evidence is there of an in-dwelling Deity, who raised these men, so sublime, so full of heaven, so full of holy aspirings? What is there like this, as the fruit of that faith and hope which are talked of, and pretended to amongst us? And then,

Direction 5. Take this direction, see that when you understand and do believe what the word of God informs us of, concerning the state of salvation, that is to be the final object of our hope, see (I say) that you do seriously desire it; that it is that which the inclination of our minds carries us to, so as earnestly to long for and covet it. Oh, that I were there! Oh, that I were possessed of the felicities and glories of that state! Otherwise, if you talk of hope of such a state, for which you do not find you have any real lively desires in your souls; you impose an impossible task upon yourselves and a contradiction. It is a perfect contradiction to hope for that which we do not desire, or to which the temper of our mind agrees not. If there be not an agreeableness in the frame of the heart and spirit unto such a state understood and believed, it can be no object of our hope. I may desire many things that I do not hope for, but I cannot hope for any thing that I do not desire; for hope always involves desire, though desire doth not always involve hope in it. There may be despairing desires, but hope hath for its object a future good, the same that desire hath; only hope doth superadd something to its object; (though that alters not the case as to this;) to wit, an apprehended difficulty, an arduousness as to the thing hoped for, otherwise desire and hope would be all one.

And about this it concerns us to deal very seriously and closely with ourselves, when we speak of hope as that mighty principle, which is to have influence towards salvation, by the influence whereof we are to be saved, (and are lost if that influence fail, and continue not;) we are to consider what we are to aim at, when we are to aim at the getting our souls possessed with such an hope; we must get them made suitable to the state hoped for; that we may be capable of desiring it; that our souls may fall in with

it; that whereas that state commence that the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may be of those that love his appearing upon that account. And whereas it is the hope of a future felicity, by the power whereof grace teacheth men effectually to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;" that hope may be looked on by us as a blessed hope, "looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," the very thought whereof (for there hope is taken objectively) is reviving to our souls, makes our hearts spring and leap in us. If you do not desire the thing hoped for, it can never be a blessed hope to you; you cannot look upon it as such: one thought of that hope, that hope but thought of, doth even bless my soul, doth make it live, diffuseth a vital influence through it.

That which is inconsistent with this is a terrene frame that continually carries us downward, a minding earthly things, that upon the account whereof the apostle speaks with tears concerning many of those Philippian Christians, to whom he writes. "I have told you of them, (saith he,) and I now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ;" that is, to the very design of his dying, which was to establish an eternal kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world; they are enemies to his very cross; why, what doth characterize them as such? Their minding earthly things. The design of his dying runs into eternity, into heaven; our conversation is in heaven, as the next words speak; but these men are all for this earth, nothing else is pleasing and grateful to them. If you give them hopes of great honour, and dignities, and riches, in this world, you take them by the heart; but tell them of the felicity of another world, you do but speak to them the words of a dream, they are mere shadows you present to their imaginations, things which they affect not, in which they feel no substance; there is nothing grateful to them in these things.

Always carry this about with you, that it is a most perfect mockery to talk of hope of that which you desire not. "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved and to be with Christ:" this is their strain who are under the power of the truly Christian hope: not as if such actual desires were the constant character of a regenerate soul, because there may be some accidental interveniencies that may damp that act of desire, may interrupt and hinder it; to wit, they may be in

doubt about the state of their case God-wards. Therefore, they cannot be positive in desiring to be unclothed and dissolved; but if the competition be between the felicity of the future state, and the felicity of the present state; and their no desire doth proceed from the greater love that they have to this world, than they have to God, and to heaven, and the purity, and sinlessness, and blessedness of the future state; this is a mortal character; and concerning such we can pronounce nothing but that "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," the design of his dying, as if he died for men only, to procure for them an earthly felicity; as if his dying were only to terminate upon an earthly happy state, than which a greater hostility to the cross of Christ, and against the design of his dying, cannot be. And again,

Direction 6. Take this further direction; to wit, when you have that object before you, in its clear and distinct state, which is to be the final object of your hope, never hope for that abstractly, and separately by itself, so as to disjoin in your hope the end, from the necessary means to that end, salvation, the state of the saved; here is the final object of hope; but then we are told by the apostle, of things that do "accompany salvation." Heb. vi. 9. Never hope for salvation abstractly, and apart from the things that do accompany it, and because that is to be considered as the final object of your hope, the things that are intermediate to it, are to be hoped for too; for there can be no connection besides, between the end and the means; but that connection lies in the aptitude such means have to this end, and the certainty of the consecution of this end, upon the use of such means. You are told of several things in scripture that have certain connection with salvation, so that without them it cannot be; with them it cannot but be. As to give you only the scripture terms of the several things, that it doth connect with salvation as inseparable from it, without explaining the things to you: as repentance, it connects with it; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Luke xviii. 5. ye shall not be saved. "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts iii. 19. by it you shall be saved.—Faith; God so loved the world, that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 3, 5.—Regeneration, without it there is no entering into the

kingdom of God, there is no seeing of it; but if men be regenerate, they are the children of God; and if they are children, then heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that, suffering with him, they may be glorified together." Rom. viii. 17.—Obedience; Christ will be author of salvation to them that obey him, Heb. v. 9. "And will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know him not, nor obey his gospel." 2 Thess. i. 8. These are the plainest connections that can be in the world, nothing can be more plain; so sanctification which falls in with many of the forementioned things: "We give thanks to God for you, that he hath chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14.

This is the direction then, that at present, I would leave with you; never be so vain as to hope for the end apart from these things, God having made a necessary connection between it and them, as means thereunto, with which it shall certainly be attained, and without which, it cannot. There are means indeed, that are foreign and external, (as divines are wont do distinguish them from these,) which have no certain connection with the end, as these have; but for those which have so certain a connection with it, it is to murder your own hope, to hope for the end without regarding the means; to hope I shall be saved, whether I repent or no, believe or no, turn to God or no, be regenerate or no, be sanctified or no, whether I obey, or disobey. This is to hope without, and to hope against it; and it is the greatest foolery in the world, for a man to hope against God's word, for that which depends wholly on his pleasure, whose word it is. Who can save me if he do not? Who can bring me heaven if he do not? So that to hope in this case, not only without his word, but against it; no greater madness than this is conceivable, or can be, among men.

SERMON XXIV.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

Direction 7. I SHALL now go on with some further directions, and in the next place, take this.

That such need to make it much their business to understand aright the nature of those things which are so absolutely necessary to being saved; to wit, not only to know that such and such things, so and so called, are requisite; or to understand the names of such as are requisite unto salvation, without distinct understanding of the things themselves, signified by those names. There is nobody that understands any thing of the Christian religion, but hath been informed, and will readily assent, that repentance is necessary to salvation; that faith is necessary to salvation; that a man if he be not regenerate cannot be saved; that if he be not converted he is not in the state of salvation; that if he do not mortify sin he must die, he must perish, and cannot be saved; that if he do not lead a life of holiness, he can never see God, must be excluded his presence for ever. Every one that lives under the gospel and understands the first elements and principles of it, readily assents to all these things; but in the mean time if one do inquire what they do understand by the things signified by such names, here they are at a loss, and to seek, and give such confused and uncertain accounts, or have so indistinct apprehensions of them, that they are never the nearer being saved for having heard of those names; but I beseech you, what can it signify, if, when God saith, they that do not believe, his wrath abideth on them; and he hath "so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that they that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" you do agree to the faith of this that God hath said in his word, you say so too; but in the mean time you intend one thing by believing, when God, it is manifest, meaneth another. You put the name of faith, the name of repentance, the name of conversion, and the name of rege-

* Preached October 11, 1691.

neration, upon quite another thing; What! will the names of these things save any body? Will any be the nearer salvation for something miscalled faith, that is not so? Something miscalled repentance, something miscalled regeneration, that are not so?

If you would rationally hope for salvation, so as that hope should really signify any thing for that end, you must understand the real influences and import of such things as these, that God hath put as necessary to salvation, and in immediate connection with it. That is, you must understand faith in Christ to be that which brings your souls into a vital, living union with him, so as that thereby you have him, and have life; such a receptive act as adjoins you to him, so as that he thereupon becomes an immediate spring of life to your souls. If you do not understand by repentance, that mighty turn and change of the whole soul, by which, when it was a stranger to God before and alienated from him, it is now entirely turned to him, and therefore it is called repentance towards God; the whole bent of the soul being turned about towards God, as its best good, and as its sovereign Lord, to whom it was a stranger and rebel before: you do not apprehend aright. It is a vain thing for us to go about to delude ourselves with names; the great thing will be, what will be taken for faith and repentance, and the rest of the mentioned things, in the judgment day; and we may know now, if we will make it our business to know, and compare scripture with scripture, one thing with another. Those that will yield the necessity of regeneration, understand nothing (it may be) by being regenerate but being baptized; when the scripture elsewhere tell us in other words, it signifies our implantation into Christ, we are born again, as we are inserted into him, and being in him, become new creatures: old things being done away, and all things being made new; such things as these, that you find in certain immediate connection with salvation; you must understand what they are, if you will ever think of entertaining hope of salvation, for such a purpose as that it shall contribute to your being saved. And,

Direction 8. Take this further direction, if you will ever hope to purpose in reference to the business of salvation, begin your hope with despair: despair, that you may hope, that is, that you may hope to any advantage. There is none in whom this hope comes to live, (as it is a living hope, that we are speaking of, and that the Spirit of God

intends,) but there must be a death past upon that soul, before such living hope doth obtain, or hath place in it; such must die, that they may live; must be slain, that they may revive. All false hope must die, they must see themselves dead, lost, and perishing, before any such hope can have place in them; but here I must be a little more particular, and tell such of some things, whereof it is most necessary that they do despair. As, first, they must despair of ever being saved without those things, which you have already heard are necessary to salvation. And then, secondly, they must despair of ever being saved, *for* such things as are to be wrought in them, or done by them. And, thirdly, they must despair of ever attaining those things by their own power.

1. They must despair of ever being saved, without those things which have been already mentioned to you, that must be wrought in us, and that, thereupon, must have an exercise from us in order to our being saved; to wit, such as are, repentance to God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the like; despair of ever being saved without these, and what goes accompanied therewith, (about priority I have no mind to trouble you with any discussion,) the full entire work of conversion, which, consider it seminally, is the same with regeneration: consider it progressively, it is the same with continued sanctification, proceeding hereupon; a dying to sin, and living to righteousness. The same design for which Christ died, and bare our sins in his "body on the tree;" 1 Peter ii. 24, that we might "die to sin, and live to righteousness," being healed by his stripes. Isaiah liii. 5. Now, without these things, we must despair of being saved, if ever we would hope for salvation upon good terms.

This I know is that way which an heart yet habitually carnal cannot but deeply and inwardly regret; but that is not to give us laws. The carnal heart was not consulted in framing and contriving the model of the gospel. God did never ask such the question, what will please you, that I may contrive the form and model of life and death, according to your inclination? Such may be apt to say, when they are urged, You must break off from every evil way; you must hate every thing of sin, how much soever you formerly loved it; you must deliver yourselves absolutely to the governing power of Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Lord, both at once; when persons (I say) come to be closely thus

urged, they will be apt to tell you, We have flesh and blood about us; what would you have us do? Why, I would put such upon considering seriously, Pray, for whom was the gospel composed? To what sort of creatures was it sent? Was it ever designed or intended to be sent up into heaven, to be preached to angels and glorious spirits above? Was it ever intended to be sent down into hell, to be preached to devils, and damned spirits there? No; it was meant for none but those that have flesh and blood about them; for none but them whose dwelling is in flesh. And would any excuse himself from repenting towards God, which is turning to him with the whole heart and soul? From believing in Christ by such a faith, as by which a vital union shall be contracted between the soul and him; with this that he hath flesh and blood about him? That is by the same excuse too, to excuse yourselves from being saved: I am not to be saved, because I have flesh and blood about me. For it is a vain imagination to think that God is at this time to alter his gospel, and make new terms of life and death for sinners; when as this gospel, as it was only made for such as dwell in flesh, or have flesh and blood about them. It is true, that hath inferred a necessity, that that in which you dwell should not rule you. If we live after the flesh we shall die; but if through the Spirit we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. How plainly doth the word of God speak his mind to us, if we will attend to it? That, therefore, is one of the things that you must despair of, if you will hope to purpose; despair of ever being saved without such things to be wrought and done in you, as God hath put in immediate and certain connection with salvation. And,

2. Despair too of ever being saved for those things that are to be acted by us, or wrought in us: though they are works of the Holy Ghost, yet the Holy Ghost was not intended to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was not to be our High Priest, we must not think to invest the Holy Ghost with the offices of Christ, and to confound their offices, and the works of their offices. Therefore, let repentance be supposed never so sincere; and faith, conversion, and regeneration, never so true in their own kind; we must despair of being saved for these things, though we must also despair of ever being saved without them. "We through the Spirit, do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Gal. v. 5. The Spirit doth frame souls to an absolute reliance upon

that righteousness that is by faith, that and no other, and so accordingly to wait for the hope of that righteousness. And,

3. Despair of ever attaining to any of these things that are so necessary by your own power; despair of ever being able to turn yourselves, or to beget faith in yourselves, or to regenerate yourselves, or to mortify sin yourselves, which you are told must be by the Spirit. The scripture will not misguide us if we will attend to it; how plainly hath it told us, that our Lord Jesus Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins?" Acts v. 31. And that it is God that gives men repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, "who are led captive by him at his will." 2 Tim ii. 26. And faith we are told is the gift of God, and it is reckoned among "the fruits of the Spirit." Gal. v. 22. And regeneration we are told is by the Spirit. If a man be not born again (or born from above) by the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3, 6. "And if we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." Rom. viii. 13. And we are likewise told, that "God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 17.

Therefore are we to despair of our reaching of those things, that are so necessary to our salvation, by any power of our own. And so to despair is the way to hope; that will not lead to absolute despair, but it only leads to this respective necessary despair, which doth itself lead to hope. It doth not make the case hopeless, that such a thing is out of my power, when it is not to be expected, except in that godlike way that is honourable to him, and becomes the enthroned majesty of heaven, that he should be owned and applied unto as the author and donor of every good and perfect gift, and perfect giving. And we shall miserably cheat ourselves, if ever we think or hope to be saved by a repentance, or faith, or conversion, that are self-sprung things, self-created things. That repentance which is only the product of our own power, or that faith, or that conversion, will lure us, will lead us to perish; but you have heard often, again, and again, that the thing is not the less matter of hope, because it is not in our own power, when as the divine power that is to effect such things is upon such sure and firm grounds to be expected and looked for, that it should exert itself for such and such purposes; but to that purpose more will come in our way bye and bye; these

are things that it is fit and needful that you should despair of that you may hope. And,

Direction 9. Take this further direction hereupon, That you are to put forth all your power to the very utmost, in order to the attaining those things that do accompany salvation, and that are in so necessary and certain connection with it. Your life lies upon it:—without these things you must perish. There is no remedy, but you must perish. What remains then? but that you do, to the uttermost, put forth all the power you have, in order to your serious repentance, in order to your believing with the faith of God's elect, and with a faith of the operation of God; and that you may have new hearts and right spirits created and renewed in you.

Objection. But it may be said, Doth not this contradict the former head? Are we to use all our power, even to the uttermost, in order to the obtaining true repentance, and true faith, and that we may be truly regenerate and turned unto God, when yet we are told, we must utterly despair of ever attaining these things by our own power?

Answer. Pray labour to understand matters that are in themselves plain. What is easier to understand, than the distinction between use and trust? Doth it follow, that because you are to distrust your own power, that therefore you are not to use it? May not a man lawfully use his money, and use his estate, because he is forbid to trust in uncertain riches? And because some do sinfully trust in chariots and horses, is it therefore unlawful to use a chariot or an horse? Consider that the natural faculties and powers that God hath given you, you are to be accountable for the use of to him. And what? Are you not then to use them? Your understandings, your considering power, your thinking power, are these exempt, from under the divine government, because you are not to trust them, as what were sufficient to do all your business? If you would but consider things with the understandings of men, you might easily know, that it is most indispensably incumbent upon us to do our uttermost, to strive as for our lives, to exert all our powers, while in the mean time, we acknowledge all our power is an insufficient thing. And therefore we are to cry and supplicate, to crave and implore heaven, for the addition of an higher and greater power than ours. This is just, this is rational, and suitable to the order of things between God and his intelligent creatures. And then again,

Direction 10. Let this further direction be considered, to wit, Constantly hope, that, by the divine power, you shall be enabled to reach and attain to those things that are, and he hath made necessary, for your salvation. And this hath two branches,

1. Constantly hope you shall attain them, otherwise, if you do not hope that hope, all is lost, and you are presently at a stand, and cannot move one step further towards being saved, or towards salvation as your end. All is lost, if that hope fail, that you shall attain those things that are necessary, by divine appointment and constitution, for salvation. For pray consider, if a man take a journey, (supposing of an hundred miles,) if he did not hope he should go through that journey, he would never begin it. It is the hope he shall go through, that doth excite and engage to begin, otherwise he would sit still at home; but then, if he doth hope that he shall go through this journey of an hundred miles, and reach such a place at length, he must hope, in order hereunto, that he shall go through the first mile. He cannot hope that he shall go the whole hundred miles, if he do not hope he shall go the first. So if you do hope you shall be saved, you must hope that you shall do things, be enabled to do things, that are necessary to being saved. He that doth not hope to reach a place, but a mile off, that is his certain and direct way to a place an hundred miles off, and there is no other way, will never make one step at all towards that place. And this is your case, when God hath made it so absolutely necessary in order to your being saved, that you repent, that you turn to him, and come into union with his Son, and deliver yourselves up to him, take him to be yours, and give yourselves to be his: if you hope not, you shall reach these things, your hope of being saved will be a mad hope; as his must be a mad hope that he shall reach his hundred miles, when he doth not hope to reach the first mile, when there is no other way to such a place an hundred miles off, but by that a mile off. And therefore this hope must be fixed and kept alive, though I cannot say I have been brought to repentance yet, and to faith in the Son of God, yet I hope I shall. You must hope first for such a thing. And then,

2. Hope that it shall be brought about by a divine power, for otherwise, (as you have heard) you are not to hope for it. And positively, you must hope for it this way, and no other way. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness; and given to us

exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 3, 4. which carries all this in it. Here must be your hope. Such things have not been wrought and done in me yet, but through the grace of God, I hope that they shall. And,

Direction 11. Take heed that defeatments and delays do not subvert and overthrow in you this hope. Of this there is the greatest imaginable danger; and these two expressions, (defeatments and delays,) I purposely intend to refer to two sorts of persons, who may have their different concerns in this direction, to wit, especially a younger and an elder sort.

1. A younger sort, such as may be in a very great struggle between strong youthful lusts, and strong convictions, which may in some measure have taken hold of their souls. This is sometimes the case, discourses that I have had with divers, and bills that I have received from more, do assure me that this is a case that requires a great place and room in our consideration and discourse. There are those who now and then, (who in that age wherein lust and concupiscence have greater advantages to be predominant,) are taken hold of by the word, and it strikes conscience, and gets some advantages upon them. They are in a great loss in their own spirits. Vicious inclinations are strong; conviction upon their spirits hath some strength too. It may be, some such have found, that whereas here is a struggle, a strong earnest struggle, the conquest is easier over conscience than over inclination: it is an easier matter to overcome there; they easier baffle their light than they can their lusts. And when they have considered, under the power of conviction, that there was some necessity upon them to change their course, it may be, they have come to some resolution upon that consideration, that they would become other men; that they would lead another sort of life. It may be, the next temptation, or the next insinuation of a lewd, idle companion, hath proved too hard and too strong for them; they could not withstand; and the bonds of iniquities have held them faster than the bonds of their vows, and covenants, and solemn engagements, that they have taken upon their souls. They have broken loose from these bonds, and are held so much the faster by those former bonds: and hereupon, having once found themselves at liberty, they sell themselves to slavery, sell themselves to do evil; and the Spirit of God that was

at work in them, is receded and gone: they began in the Spirit, they have ended in the flesh. There are now no more gales, not one breath of that Spirit upon their spirits any more. An hopeful gale they had, that brought them near to a safe harbour; but they are, all on a sudden, hurried back again to a raging sea, that casts up nothing but mire and dirt. What a fearful case is this? If they reflect upon themselves, they will be ready to say, What is to be done in this case? And truly if any one should say so to me, I should return the question, What will you do in this case? or what do you think is to be done in this case? Do you think there is no hope in the case? Will you say that? or if there is to be any hope, what shall that hope be of? or what are ye to hope for? Such a thing I would consider and debate with any such an one. Are you to have any hope at all? Are you to abandon all hope? Truly that is not like a reasonable creature to say so, that you are to abandon all hope, while you are yet on this side hell, and infernal flames have not yet seized you; you are not to put yourself into the state of a devil, whilst as yet, God hath not put you into that state. But if you are to hope at all, what are you to hope for? Are you to hope that God will save you upon other terms than he hath declared in his gospel? Are you to hope that he will make a new gospel, to comply with your humour and lustful inclination? Are you to hope for that? That certainly were the maddest hope that ever was taken up by any one. All hope you are to have is, that if you have any apprehension of your case, the grieved Spirit may return, the affronted, resisted Spirit, if you cry for its return; if you supplicate as for life, that Spirit that carries all the treasures of divine light, and life, and grace in it, may yet return. There have been instances of its having done so.

How famous is the story that we meet with in Church History, concerning that vicious young man, that was at first reduced by the ministry of the Apostle John, and brought to a great degree of seriousness! The Apostle, having occasion to absent himself from the place where he was, leaves him under the care of such an one, charging him with his soul; "Look (saith he) well to the soul of this young man." After the Apostle was gone, the young man breaks out into his former excesses again, and herds himself with a company of thieves and cut-throats. The Apostle being returned, and inquiring after him, saying, What is become of that young man? The answer that was made

him was, He is dead, dead in sin, dead in wickedness again: much like the usage that was in Pythagoras's school, where if any had been in that school of virtue, and made some proficiency there for any considerable time, and relapsed into vice, they were solemnly cast out, and a coffin was brought into the place to hold a funeral for them as dead; so it is said of this young man, he was dead. But the Apostle makes inquiry after him, and finds him out, brings him to his feet, takes hold of him, down he falls, and by the power of prayer and holy counsel, he was effectually reduced, and brought back again.

So it may yet be with some such horrid decliners and backsliders from the ways of God. If they apprehend whither they are going, whither their way leads them, and cry for the returning of the Holy Ghost as for life, as apprehending themselves lost if he return not, there is yet hope in this case. And it is by no means in the world, to be thought of, that such are to abandon all hope; for that is to make devils of themselves above ground, and to create to themselves a present hell on this side hell. You are within the reach of the gospel while you are on this side of the infernal regions; and it is a gospel of grace, crying to you, Return,—return. These are they to whom I had reference in that word defeats; do not let your hope be destroyed, by the defeats you have met with. But then,

2. There is another sort that I had a more distinct reference to in my thoughts, in using the word delays, in this direction, Take heed lest defeatments and delays destroy your hope. Now that of delays, I meant in reference to such as have sat long under the gospel, even to a grown age, and never have found any good effect by it; it hath wrought no change, made no impression. There may be many such, that were never vicious persons at all, never grossly vicious; but then they have lived in a place where some exercises of religion were a fashionable thing. They have had religion enough to carry them to a sermon on the Lord's day in some Christian assembly, and perhaps to engage in somewhat of family duties; perhaps so, but they have sat with mere formality the greatest part of a life time, under the gospel, and never felt any real good by it, never expected any, never designed any; but come to a church, or a meeting-house, and spend an hour or two with the rest, in solemn attendances upon the worship of God, and never look after it more, (it may be,) till the week come

about again. All their business is driving designs for this earth; "They mind earthly things," as the Apostle's character is of them, of whom also he saith, "their end is destruction." Phil. iii. 18, 19. What it was to have their souls turned to God, to come to a solemn closure with Christ as their Redeemer and Lord, or to exercise themselves unto inward heart-godliness in any kind, they know not what belongs to it. It may be, they are just and upright in their dealings with those with whom they have to do; and they reckon that their justice towards men must expiate all their injustice towards God, their neglect of him, their slighting him, their casting him out of their thoughts, out of their fear and out of their desires.

This seems to be a very sad case, that a man should have lived all his days under the gospel, and it hath never made any impression on him as yet: the Spirit of God hath not as yet sensibly breathed, so as, at least, to beget any permanent and abiding effect; here hath been a long deferring, a long delaying of taking hold of these souls to purpose; and it may be, now their long delay may make such persons think, No, there is no change to be hoped for, nothing to be expected, none to be looked for; I have sat so long, so many years, ten, twenty, or thirty, (it may be,) forty years, under the gospel, under such a ministry, and never hath there been any such effect wrought upon me, and I do not think there ever will.

Oh! take heed, lest the having any such work upon you deferred so long, do destroy hope that ever such work shall be done; for then again, all is lost if you be hopeless; if there be not a vital hope and expectation, from time to time, in such and such a word, that some good may be done in my soul, that I may hear somewhat that I may feel, that the word may yet drop that may have life in it, that may have power in it. If you do not hope for this, if you do not expect such a thing, you are, as much as you can, putting yourselves quite out of the way of being saved, or having the reasonable hope of it; for still I must say, you are not to expect a new gospel, that God will save you without those necessary pre-requisites to salvation, without repentance, without faith, without conversion, and without sanctification. And therefore in the last place,

Direction 12. That which I would lastly add, by way of direction to this sort of persons is, that you would see to it, that though hope in these cases must not be thrown away, that yet it be qualified with such concomi-

tants as are proper and suitable in such a case. They are such as these; I will but name them, that the next time my discourse may directly respect the other case, that of perseverance.

1. *Prayer.* Your hope in such a case as this must always be accompanied with prayer. It must be praying, supplicating hope. It is suitable to your case, if you hope to pray; and never hope without prayer. When we are exhorted to take to ourselves the "helmet," which we are told "is the hope of salvation," it is presently subjoined, "praying always with all prayer and supplication." Eph. vi. 17. with 1 Cor. v. 8. These must be conjunct; if we hope, we must continue to pray. Give yourselves to prayer, to all prayer and supplication, otherwise we do (as much as possible) blast all our hope, and it can never be an helmet to us; it will betray our head, not cover it, not protect it.

2. *Deep Humility.* Join deep humility with your hope. Let it be humble hope. Such an one should "put his mouth in the dust, if there might be any hope." Lam. iii. 29. And,

3. *Self Loathing.* Join with it self-loathing, self-abhorrence; not only of yourselves as mean creatures, but as vile and odious; and yet hope, join hope with that self-abasing temper, self-loathing of the Publican: then will your sense be, (as his,) "God be merciful to me a sinner," who it is said at last went away justified and accepted. If you be fair in your own eyes, if your sense be that of the Laodicean Church, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked;" you have no place in you for that hope that will do you any good; but such self reviling thoughts, "If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul, I would despise my life;" how well doth hope do in such a tempered spirit as this? How suitable a soil is this for that heavenly hope to grow and flourish in? And,

4. *Watchfulness.* Join to your hope watchfulness and vigilancy. Watchfulness may respect both God and yourselves. Watchfulness respecting God is exercised in continual looking towards him: when shall that happy time come? when shall any beam of light descend? when shall any influence of grace flow in? Watchfulness respecting yourselves is exercised in watching over a treacherous heart: and know, that whenever you are to design such a

thing, as your own salvation, and so accordingly to hope for it, a main and principal, and immediate object of your hope must be, that you shall be saved from yourselves; and thereupon indeed, it is a most self-contradicting hope, to hope I shall be saved, without hoping that sin shall be overcome. I shall gain the conquest at last over predominating corrupt inclinations, whether more grossly sensual ones, or whether avaricious ones, or ambitious ones, and the like; for do not you know, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath therefore his name of Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins: and do you think you shall be saved, without being saved from yourselves, your sinful selves? This is to hope you shall be saved without salvation; this is to hope with such an hope, as wherewith you shall tear a thing from itself, to hope you shall be saved without being saved. If ever you are to be saved, you are to be saved from yourselves; and therefore, yourselves are to be the great object of your watchfulness, your continual vigilancy; watching over yourselves, as your worst and most dangerous enemy. I am to fear hell from myself, death from myself, a curse from myself; and lest I be a continual spring of all misery and woe to myself, there must be a continual watchfulness over ourselves, to repress all ebullitions of corrupt nature at the first. Oh! this lustful heart! This proud heart! This ambitious heart! This sensual heart! A severe self-inspection into, and watchfulness over ourselves, is that which must be in conjunction with hope. Watch and hope, be sober and hope to the end. That spiritual sobriety carries vigilancy in it, a continual watchfulness over yourselves. And again,

5. *Patience.* This hope must be accompanied with patience. Doth not the context tell you so? "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." God is not bound to your time, he hath not come in yet; suppose he do not strike that stroke upon your heart this day, that is necessary to your being saved. Why hope that he will the next day, or the next after that, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." "Blessed is he that watcheth at the doors," that waiteth at the posts of wisdom's gates; "for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour from the Lord." Prov. viii. 34, 35. I have not met with him that is to be the life of my soul yet; but I will wait, I will miss no opportunity, I will be always at the posts of wisdom's door, I may find

him at last, who will be the life of my soul; and there all my hopes and all my concernments are involved and wrapt up together. And in the last place,

6. *Diligence.* You must join diligence with hope; an industrious, laborious diligence. It must be a working, operative hope, like that of the husbandman, who ploweth in hope, and soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope, as the Apostle's allusion is; so must you, as to this spiritual husbandry in which you must be engaged, you must strive in hope, and labour in hope. And if yours be not an hope that will put you upon striving and labouring, it is a dead hope, an useless hope; and such as can contribute nothing to your salvation. And so I have done with those directions that are requisite as to the former sort, the unregenerate and unconverted; the next will respect the other sort, and their case, to wit, that of converts, so as to influence their perseverance unto salvation.

SERMON XXV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

The order of discourse upon this subject hath brought me now at length to say somewhat, by way of direction, to those, who, being regenerate, and turned to God, are on their way towards him. That the principle of hope, which doth more especially belong to their regenerate state, may be improved by them, to their cheerful and more comfortable progress through the whole of their course and way to their end. We having spoken by way of direction to a former sort, and to a former case, to wit, to direct how hope may be improved, in order to conversion and regeneration itself: nor am I solicitous, that the course I have taken upon this subject hath obliged me to be long upon it; for I both consider the great importance of the subject, which I cannot but know as you, any of you may, and must, when you seriously bethink yourselves of it. And also, I know not, that any have purposely and designedly treated

* Preached October 18, 1691.

upon this subject; that is, to shew the necessary influence of hope upon the whole business of a Christian's life, from first and last, from the beginning of it, till it end in eternal life.

I shall repeat nothing of what hath been said by way of direction, in reference to the former case, to wit, to persons yet unregenerate, what improvement is to be made of hope in order to their regeneration, and their being born of God; to which nothing is more plain, than that it would never be, but as even then they begin to have hope God-ward. But my present and remaining business is to shew the continual influence that hope may be improved unto for a Christian's progress, to help on those that are regenerate, and born to God, in their way to him. That so, upon the whole matter, you may see the new creature, it is from first to last a creature (as it were) made up of hope; its very make and constitution are suited to the state which it is successively made for. In this present state, while its great supports do lie in unseen and expected good things, there cannot but be a continual exercise of hope necessary from first to last; but in the other state, hope naturally turns into joy; when the things that were before matter of expectation, are now come to be the matter of actual fruition. In the meantime, its make and frame suit it to the present state of its case. That whereas, such as were before strangers and aliens to God, in a state of apostacy from him, they begin to be prompted and stirred up to look after God; as soon as any such instinct is put into them, it is put into them in a way of hope.

God hath a design in hand to restore and recover apostate creatures; saith the soul, I own myself to be such an one; I am miserable, and lost for ever, if I do not return to God, and if God accept me not. I have hope I shall: I have hope he will. And so the soul is (as it were) begotten to God, even by the power of hope; and being reconciled, the great remaining expectation is, of being saved, of being brought to a safe and happy state at last. Hope runs through the course of such a converted, regenerate soul, even to the attainment of its end, which is actual salvation.

And whereas the gospel is the great and stated means by which souls are, both begotten unto God, and enabled to adhere and cleave to him, even to the end; where that gospel hath long been, there is great reason to think that God had much such work to do; many such blessed effects to

bring about upon souls; and that much such work is done: that with us, God hath touched many souls, turned many hearts, implanted that new and divine principle in many, that will certainly end at last in eternal life. It is not to be thought (or at least one would be very loth to think or imagine such a thing) that a bright, and blissful heaven should have been opened among us, so long, so continually, by the gospel, whose design it is to bring life and immortality to light, that we, amidst all the impurities, and darkness, and wretchedness, of this our present state, should have such a glorious prospect given us, and set before our eyes; heaven opened in all the glories of it, (as in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it is;) and that we, after all this, should agree in it as our common sense, and sentiment, that it is better always to dwell in this dungeon, so as to have no aspirings, no hope, directed upward, towards that glorious state of things; one would be loth (I say) to admit such an apprehension as this; that this should be our common sentiment; that it is better to dwell in a dungeon always, than amidst all that divine light and glory, above, whither we are called, and whereupon the hope of our calling doth finally terminate; yea, and though we know that the dungeon is to fall upon us ere it be long, and that they who have effected that dwelling, must certainly be overwhelmed with its ruin. It is meet for us to judge that there are sundry, whose souls God hath, by the power of his gospel animated by his Spirit, possessed with another sense.

And if there be many such, or any such, that are looking higher, that have their expectations and hopes placed upon some other sorts of things, things of an higher excellency and value than this lower creation can afford; the greatest care imaginable then must be had, that their hope be kept alive in strength and vigour; if it fail, if it should languish, if it were possible it should, and it were ever so certain, that it should never expire and fail; yet means must be used, that it may not; but (I say) if it should fail, (and the dread ought to be upon our spirits, that it may not fail, that it may never fail;) then are such poor creatures ingulphed again, sunk in, and swallowed up by the spirit of this world; and so exposed, and left to be involved with it in its fearful ruin. That it may not be so, and because it shall not be so with those that do peculiarly belong to God, and are the children of the kingdom, begotten to the eternal heavenly inheritance; all endeavours must be used that

hope may be preserved and kept alive in them. And in order to it, pray take these following directions.

Direction 1. See that your spirits be deeply and seriously engaged, and taken up in the meditation of that glorious state of things which you profess finally to hope for, and which you expect should be your eternal state. See (I say) that your spirits be deeply exercised in meditation of that glorious state of things. The way to keep hope alive, is to keep its glorious, blessed object in view. The hope of the greatest things imaginable can never live, or be influential in any of us, if we do not preserve the remembrance, and have not the actual thoughts of them. If there be such a thing as the habit of hope yet left, it will be a languishing thing, and afford us no support; it will be as dead within us, if we have not frequent views of the glorious object of it; if we do not look towards that object, take it in its comprehension, and compass even the whole state of things, that we expect and hope for as our final and eternal state.

I pray, let us labour, not only to realize, but familiarize to ourselves the unseen world. It is a shame that we should be called Christians, and that our thoughts should be taken up chiefly, and principally, about things that are seen. Christian hope lies beyond and above those things: we forfeit our names while we confine our thoughts so much to that which is present and sensible. If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, as Christians, we make ourselves the most miserable of creatures; we are made up of contradictions, we are in a continual war with ourselves, we do not act and carry it so consistently with ourselves as other men do, who do not pretend to Christianity; we are more miserable than they.

And, that I may the more fruitfully enlarge upon this, as, that without which our hope is a languid and insignificant thing, and in a direct way to be reduced to nothing; let me desire you to give compass and scope to your thoughts about the invisible world, and the expected state of things, which is to be the great and final object of your hope. The context, which hath so immediate reference thereunto, would afford you very great help for the managing and directing your thoughts in the contemplation of the invisible state. You see it is spoken of a little before the text, under the notion of glory; a glorious state, a state of glory. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be

revealed in us," verse 18. And that glory is spoken of under the notion of an inheritance. They that are the regenerate sons of God, and now actually under the government of the Divine Spirit which begot them unto God; they that are so children, are also heirs, "heirs of God, and and joint heirs with Christ," verse 17. "That after having suffered awhile with him, they may be also glorified together with him." As to the invisible world, (that happy part of it, where "the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," have their eternal concernments lying,) that happy part of it is to be looked upon as a region of glory, all glory. And that you may give latitude and scope to your thoughts about this, which is the very hope of your calling, the final hope of it, I pray consider such things as these more particularly concerning it. Considerations to enforce this first direction.

1. Contemplate the vast amplitude of that glorious region, where you (if you be regenerate, and born of God, and heirs of the celestial kingdom) are to have your everlasting abode. Think (I say) seriously and often of the vast amplitude of it, that you may give scope and room to your thoughts; it is mean to be confined in our apprehenhensions of things to this little spot of our earth, wherein we breathe; think if you were ascending from it, if you were ascended but a little way, into how vastly larger, and more spacious, and roomy a region do you come but by a little ascent; but if you were ascended as high as our vortex, as the utmost confines of this vortex of ours, to which this earth, and the sun, and moon, and other planets do belong; how inconsiderable a point is all this earth, in comparison of that vortex to which all these do belong? But if you were beyond that, beyond that circuit and those confines within which all this planetary region is limited; then how vastly spacious are all the supernal heavens above the regions in which the sun, and moon, and other planets, do move? So as we are even lost in the thoughts whither we should then go; and it is pleasant to be so lost.

And to consider how despicable a nothing this earth of ours is in comparison; so as it may be lost, it may be consumed, and burnt up, and that it is an insignificant thing to the universe; no more than the burning of one single little cottage would be in a vast empire, containing two hundred and twenty-seven provinces as Ahasuerus's did; one that is an heir of heaven, and of the inheritance of the saints in light, when he thinks of the burning of this world, may say

what is it to me? my concernments lie not here, it is a despicable, inconsiderable trifle; it is no more loss to the creation, and no more loss to me, than the dropping of an hair, one single hair. Labour to aggrandize to yourselves so much as this comes to, of the object of your hope; to wit, to consider the vast amplitude of the region of glory: we must think with ourselves, that as to what doth more subside in this creation is baser and meaner, fitter for baser and meaner inhabitants; it is but a very little inconsiderable part, in comparison of the ample and spacious regions of the encircling heavens above, that seem all appropriated to the heirs of the eternal kingdom. And then,

2. When you are laying before your eyes the object of your hope, that that may be lively and strong in you; consider too the numerous multitude of the inhabitants of those glorious regions, or, to speak collectively of that region of glory. It is true, in this little inconsiderable world of ours, we find the inhabitants are generally very numerous, (as there will be more occasion to speak bye and bye;) but, alas, what is this little perishable thing, (this world of ours,) to the universe? And it is a very unreasonable foolish thought to think the nobler parts of the creation of God to be less destitute of inhabitants than our earth is. Do but turn up a clod of earth, and you see every little clod inhabited with somewhat or other that hath life in it, little insects and *animacula* that have life in them. It is a foolish thought, to think that the nobler parts of the creation of God should be less full of inhabitants, though still meaner the nearer this earth; but if you ascend higher, you are to suppose all filled with living inhabitants; and (as we have reason to apprehend) with creatures innocent and upright with God, angel-like creatures.

It is true many angels fell, many, if you consider them abstractedly; but take them comparatively, and we have no reason to think but that they were a very small part of the host of heaven, in comparison with them that stood, and retained their integrity; and if the upper regions be replenished with innocent creatures, full of the love of God, and of the knowledge of God, and who stand in absolute devotedness to him; then you must consider the blessed society, the society of the blessed, to be a most numerous thing. The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of men made perfect; so that the angels that have fallen, and the apostate sons of men that shall not be recovered, and that finally persist in enmity against all the

methods of reconciliation, though they will be numerous, yet a little inconsiderable number they must be, in comparison of all those glorious creatures that inhabit the more noble parts of God's creation: and it would make a man's hope revive, and spring, and flourish mightily in him, to think of being ere long one of that vast and numerous assembly, that blessed glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. And,

3. Consider, again, the high and admirable perfection of these blessed creatures, of whom you are to be one; their bodily perfections, (which are not nothing,) and their mental spiritual perfections, which are incomparably more, are to be considered. As to the former, the words immediately foregoing the text, do directly cast back our thoughts upon them, upon those perfections that are more properly corporeal, and that belong to the body: not only they, (that is the rest of the creation,) but ourselves also, which have received the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting (which carries hope in it as you do well know) for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope. We that now dwell in these bodies so cumbersome, so tiresome, that are such an annoyance to us, and so great a depression to us; we are hoping, hoping for a time and state of things when these bodies are to have an entire, complete redemption from every thing which is gravanimous and burthensome to them, and by which they are gravanimous to our spirits, to ourselves; and it is by the hope of this, that we are saved. Here we are depressed and sunk very low; these bodies are prisons and dungeons to us; they are so, but we are saved by that hope of the day of our redemption; the redemption of our bodies, which is also the day of our adoption, or solemn adoption.

I have told you upon this occasion formerly, of a double adoption among the Romans, private and public. It is the public adoption that is here referred to. In the private, every good soul is adopted when it is regenerate; but the public adoption, or the manifestation of the sons of God, (as it is afterwards called,) it is referred unto that day when all are to be visibly invested with their glorious bodies, conformed to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. To have such an agility of body as that, it shall never be a clog; such refined spirits that will never cloud our thoughts, that will never obstruct the notions of the soul.

And that shall be, with respect of aptitude, to speedy motion so little cumbersome, that, as Austin's celebrated expression is, *ubi voluerit animus, ibi protinus erit corpus*; wheresoever the mind wills or wishes to be, there the body shall be in a moment. Its motions, and (for ought we know,) its texture, (as that of the sun beams,) gliding as quick as a thought, this way, or that; and (for ought we know) as fine; it being very easy to make the grossest earth as fine as the purest ether, to him that made all things out of nothing; and since chemistry performs a great deal this way by human art, much more may divine.

So as that these bodies that we are afterwards to inhabit, are said to be from heaven, the terrestrial to be all gone; for in this we groan, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven." 2 Cor. v. 2. All of apiece with heaven, contempered unto heaven, the earthly house of this tabernacle, changed into such an one.

2. And it is very material, and seems to be glanced at in that which is said by our Saviour; "The righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii. 43. The sun in the firmament is (as it were) the resemblance of a glorified body, and how near it may be of the same materials we cannot tell, all our earth being refined into so pure and celestial a matter. And,

3. And then, if you consider again the spiritual and mental perfections (which is incomparably a great thing) of the happy members of this glorious, blessed, numerous society. There you must understand his knowledge in perfection, his holiness in perfection, and his love in perfection. It cannot be expected that in this subject, I could stay to dilate upon every one; but it is a great thing to think of the matter of our own hope in this: I hope to be one of them, I hope to be such a creature, inhabiting such a mind, in such a body, to be one of those *Isangeloi*, (as they are called,) angels' fellows, equal to the angels of God: Oh! that we should have such things as these in view, and obvious to our thoughts, and yet have no thoughts about them, or few thoughts about them! Live with minds (as it were) confined to this earth, and continually grovelling in the dust of it! This is mean, this is dishonourable to our Father, who hath begotten us to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance; and it is most injurious to ourselves. To think that I shall have a mind, a spirit ere it be long, (as mean and abject a thing as I now am,) all (as it were) composed, and made

up of knowledge, and of purity, and of love ; what a glorious thing is that ? And that I shall have a spirit inhabiting a body, (since I was made to join with a body,) that shall be no hindrance, no burthensome thing to me, no tedious, irksome, companion to all eternity. And again,

4. Consider about this state, the universal harmony that must hereupon be in all this glorious, blessed society, as vastly numerous and extensive as it is through the spacious heavens, those regions of light and bliss : come whereever one will, the same order universally obtaining every where ; all animated by one and the same spirit ; for they " that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 8. That immense almighty Spirit (as the living creature in the wheels) acting in every mind, be they ever so numerous, and never so vastly extended through the regions of light and bliss; all everlastingly under the dominion of the same blessed, almighty, and omnipresent Spirit; so that there is here among them, wheresoever they be, not one dissentient thought; all have the same sentiment, the same mind, the same inclination, and all centre in one and the same design : no jarring, no disagreement, no darkness, no obscurity, no error, much more no animosity, having the least place in any member of that glorious society. And again,

5. Consider the glorious visible residence of our great Redeemer among them, who can render himself every where present, and every where appearing in conspicuous glory. How grateful and entertaining a thought must that be to them, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, that they are to be for ever with the Lord, when that happy season comes, that the Lord descends with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ are first raised and caught up into the clouds, and do meet their Redeemer in the air, then are they ever with the Lord. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. never out of his company, though their company be so vastly numerous and great ; for he is the head of all principalities and powers, the head of all things to the church ; and yet he must be every where present to every one, for they are all to be ever with the Lord. And when so much is plainly enough expressed and declared to us, we need never trouble ourselves to think how it shall be ; he that we know to have done so great things already, can easily add to this all the rest; make himself present to those vastly numerous, innumerable

myriads of glorious creatures, that do every where delight in his presence, and cannot but eternally do so.

And to this also, the context here refers us, still leading us to the final object of our hope; they are to be the heirs of the eternal glory, as their inheritance; they are to be "joint heirs with Christ," they are to inherit with Christ, "and, after having suffered with him, are to be glorified together with him," verse 17; after we have suffered awhile; he and we having been suffering together, he and we shall be glorified together. And to the same purpose is that admirable contexture of discourse; 2 Cor. v. from the beginning of the chapter to the 8th verse; but I cannot stay to run it over with you. Take notice, I pray you, what you find there, in that 8th verse; we are confident, (saith he,) and willing rather to be absent from the body, (this terrestrial body,) not any body at all, not altogether to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon; this terrestrial body being reformed, refined, clarified into another thing: for that body we are now in, this terrestrial body, we covet rather to be absent from it, and to be present with the Lord. According to that, Phil. i. 23. I desire rather to be "dissolved and be with Christ, which is far better." We are to be in his presence, and to have him present among us, as soon as we are loose from this base, mean thing, this vile body that we are now linked, and clogged with. And the expressions are very observable, that are used in the mentioned place, 2 Cor. v. The words used, signify to be peopled with, or unpeopled, or dispeopled from. The expression of being present with the Lord, doth intimate the Lord our blessed Redeemer to be the head, the president of that dis-peopled sort of people, whose dwelling is not with flesh; they do not inhabit and dwell in such bodies as those are, in which we now dwell; and I long (saith he) to be dis-peopled from this bodily sort of people; and to be taken into the communion of that people that dwell out of such bodies with the Lord; to be peopled with that people, of which he is the immediate, visible, glorious, head; there I long to be. I would fain be absent from this body. I desire it rather, I choose it as a more desirable thing, to be dis-peopled from this bodied sort of people; and to be peopled with them, to make one amongst them, who do people the glorious regions above, which are peopled with another sort of inhabitants, and with them do I covet and hope to dwell, and long to dwell. And then,

6. Consider too the divine presence universally reple-

nishing all, for in that everlasting state God is himself to be immediately all in all; and so all to be universally transformed into the image of that bright glory, which shines upon them from his blessed face, and all to inhabit that one and the same divine presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are "pleasures for evermore." Psalm xvi. last verse. Oh! for such mean creatures as we, to have such a thing in hope, to make one in that glorious, celestial community, among whom, the blessed eternal God shall, by immediate communication, be all in all to every one! Every soul as full of God, as it can hold, and be made capable of beholding unspeakably more, than we can now so much as conceive of; for the design is in our present state, (and very much by the influence of hope,) here to have us refining, and be made more capacious and larger vessels of glory. They that are to be vessels of mercy first, are to be vessels of glory afterwards; here they are to be gradually greatened and enlarged, (and very much by the influence of hope,) in order to their being more receptive vessels, that they may hold more, and be capable of larger and fuller communications from that immense fulness, that filleth all in all. And hereupon,

7. Consider the high satisfaction that every one of those blessed creatures must have in himself, for there is to be a glory revealed in us, (as a little above the text.) The context is full of accounts of the final object of our hopes, and gives us frequent occasion to consider what it imports, and carries with it; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Every one of these glorious creatures, is to be glorious within. As it is said of the king's daughter, the spouse of Christ, "She is all glorious within." Psalm xlv. "She will be perfectly so; for he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it, and to cleanse it, and to present it a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27. And sanctification is implied to be the very beginning of that glory the foundation of it. That glory consists in perfect sanctification. He gave himself for it, to sanctify and make it a glorious church; every one of it is then a glorious creature, and eternally glorious, by glory revealed in the divine image shining in him, in perfect and consummate glory. That image which stands all in knowledge, and holiness, in the greatest amiableness, loveliness, and love that is possible.

How infinitely satisfying must such an one's own frame,

and the complexion and temper of his own mind, be to himself, when, through a boundless and immense eternity, one shall never have occasion to reflect upon one disorderly thought, or say I wish that thought had never been thought; never have occasion to reflect upon one irregular wish! Oh! the holy order and rectitude that will be within, when every faculty and every power shall be under the dominion of that Almighty Spirit of divine light and grace; when it shall be as impossible to be the author of one wrong, or misplaced thought, as it would be to any of us to be the author of another world, of a world that should be excentrical to this! What a satisfaction is this, and must be, when a person shall so everlastingly agree with himself, as to have no war within him, nothing of reluctation, nothing of contrariety, against what he knows to be equal, and congruous, and fit, and comely; but every thing just as it should be. And then, thereupon,

8. The mighty complacency that such must take in one another; the everlasting complacencies that they must take in one another, when they are all alike, not equal; it is plain enough there will be different orders; but all alike, all of one mind, all of one sentiment, all conspiring in one and the same design. And then consider,

9. The pleasantness of their perpetual work, wherein they are all to be united; to wit, joyful and everlasting adoration; every one pleased with another, upon this account, that he knows him to be pleased with exalting God and the Lamb, for ever, and ever; when every one knows his fellow to have the same pleasure that he hath in prostration, in falling down before the throne, in ascribing all praise, and dominion, and glory, to him that lives for ever, and ever; the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. When the comeliness and equity of the thing recommends itself so fully to every mind, and all agree in one sense. "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive blessing, and power, and dominion, for ever, and ever," and all say Amen, all proclaim their joyful Amen. The vast and spacious heavens continually resounding with this sort of melody, all giving their joyful, grateful Amens, to one and the same thing. And this eternity goes on, never wearisome, never grievous; because all this employment, and the exercise is so suitable to the complexion of every one's mind, none can ever disagree to it, and all things do conspire, and concur to make these associates in bliss, and glory, and adoration, the most grateful company to one another. We ex-

perience something what pleasure and sweetness there is in conversing with such as are wise, and learned, and good, when these things are in conjunction; but when they are in perfection, in absolute perfection, Oh, the pleasure that will be taken in being associated with such ones! Lastly,

10. The perfect assurances that all have of the perpetuity of their state, and that there shall never be an end of it. "The light afflictions that are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" it can never lose its weight; there will be no detraction, no diminution from it, to eternity. Therefore there is an impossibility, an utter impossibility that ever there should be a cessation.

And that is one direction to this purpose, to keep alive this hope, contemplate much, and as distinctly, and with as clear and formed thoughts as you can, the glorious object of it, the final and eternal state; and be ashamed of having such things in view, and of having so few, so unfrequent, and dull, and sluggish, thoughts about such things.

SERMON XXVI.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

BUT now go on with the further directions that are to be given for the mentioned end.

Direction 2. That we compare with that expected heavenly state the present state wherein we are; and with the blessedness of the one, the wretchedness of the other. For if there be any ground for a better hope, there is nothing more likely to awaken it, (supposing we have such a ground before our eyes,) than to have our spirits effectually stung with the sense of the present evils wherewith we are beset, and with which we are continually infested. If we like our present state well, there is no place for hope, no room for it, or if it can have any place, it can have no effect;

* Preached, October 25, 1691.

it will be a very faint, languishing hope, that we shall have for another state, if we are very well pleased with that wherein we are already; and therefore, as to our present state, we should bethink ourselves, and consider, whether, having such a future one in view as hath been represented already, as the ultimate, final object of our hope, we have reason to take up with that wherein we already are.

And this we are manifestly led to by the context, which, when the text tells us, "We are saved by hope," doth conjunctly tell us, what the present state of our case is, in a twofold respect; in respect of this world, in which we live; and in respect of these bodies, to which we are now confined. The former whereof draws our thoughts to consider the remoter evils which do beset us; and the latter, those nearer and more pressing evils which are closely and continually urgent upon us.

1. In reference to the state of this world, can we think it a covetable thing, long to continue in such a world as this, when we have any ground in view, of a better hope, or the object of a better, represented to us? See how the state of the world is represented in what goes before, and which the text refers unto, that is, the creature (this inferior creation it must mean) is all subjected unto vanity, and is all groaning under the bondage of corruption, and travailing in pain together, until now. This being the case in this respect, saith the Apostle, "We are saved by hope." We are here ingulphed in a world of miseries and sorrows; and all things round about, they are (as it were) in one degree, or another, under a pressure and languor; do not we behold the creation drooping? This lower world in which we are, may be seen (as it were) hanging the head, that a languishment is upon all things, the shadow of death hovering over all in every part, and yet subjected unto this state in hope; hope being in reference to the inanimate or irrational part to be understood but objectively. It is subjected to this state of things, but in hope; there being a prospect that it shall be redeemed, shall be recovered, so as to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, whose manifestation doth approach. Now, when all this world is hoping for a better state of things, shall not we hope? We that have received the first fruits of the Spirit, as it afterwards follows: or, what? is impurity, misery, and wretchedness, become so much our element, that we are content to live still there, whilst all things are (as it were) expressing a sense round about us, groaning and travailing; and

we pleased, we only pleased, to remain in such a state as this is? But to look upon the state of things in this world, more particularly.

(1.) We find it replenished with inhabitants, over whom, Satan hath universal dominion; he is called the god of this world, (the usurping god of it,) the "spirit that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience." 2 Cor. iv. 6, and Eph. ii. beginning; as you know the scripture speaks in those places I refer unto. This is that which puts the world into paroxysms every where; it is under the power of the great destroyer, the Abaddon, the Apollyon, he, whose business it is to destroy, to tear all to pieces, as much as in him is. And hence, by consequence,

(2.) We find this world to be replenished with inhabitants full of atheism, and enmity against their Sovereign, and rightful Lord. All affecting to be without God in the world. And,

(3.) They are full of all unrighteousness, malignity, deceit, envy, wrath, as experience shews, from age to age, and from generation to generation; and never more than in this age. A world replenished with inhabitants, that are tearing one another to pieces every where, as they can have opportunity; such an account as is given of the inhabitants of this world, (Rom. i. latter end,) how exactly doth it suit the present state of things? And indeed, the ordinary state, more or less, in all times and ages? And again,

(4.) They are still more liable to disturbance from it, who would have least to do with it; to wit, those that are most intent upon wickedness, every where are most mischievous to them who have any savour or impression of goodness upon them, so that it is to them that are such a very hell. It is to themselves very much their own element. The world is such as they make it themselves, and in very great part affect to have it; but to them that have received an impression from above, and are begotten with a principle that suited them to be inhabitants of another world, it is of all others most troublesome, mischievous, and disquieting, to them; and therefore, they of all others have much the more reason to be weary of it, and to cherish the hope (when they have any ground for it) of being in a better state, a better world, ere it be long. And if we lastly consider,

(5.) The dreadful ruin that will befal this world, in the tract of time, and before a perfectly good state can obtain or have any place; now much soever things may be better

in the meantime; yet there is an universal ruin to be before there can be a perfect and thorough restoration. And the world is groaning, and travailing in pangs, and will be, more or less so, even to that end, that consummation of things, that day, when all is to be (as it were) purged with fire, " and pass away with a great noise." " When the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, (these lower heavens,) and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with all things therein, be consumed and burnt up." 2 Peter iii. Notwithstanding all such ruin, we look " for a new heavens, and a new earth;" according to God's own promise, we look for new heavens, and a new earth, a new universe (as it were) composed, and made up of heaven and earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Now the wretched state of things, in the meantime, should mightily sublimate, and heighten, and invigorate the hope of that glorious state, that is to be expected afterwards. And then, if we consider,

2. The nearer, and more closely pressing evils that are upon us, as we are in such bodies, as these we do now inhabit, and dwell in, even that should mightily enliven hope, and put it upon a more vigorous exercise, for those are the evils that we are stung with continually; and to these we find there is a more immediate reference, in what goes before the text, not only they, (the rest of the creation which are, by an elegant rhetorical *prosopopeia,* represented as having sense, and having hope; a sense of the present evils, and a hope of a better state, not only they,) " but we ourselves also (verse 23,) who have received the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." These are the next following words: not only they, not the rest of the creation only; but we ourselves also, (much more, it must be understood,) who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan, waiting for the adoption, that is, the manifestation of the sons of God, mentioned before in the 19th verse, when our adoption shall be declared, when the sons of God shall look like themselves, and like their Father, whereas now they look very unlike him. It is as if the Apostle had said, Do you think they shall always dwell so meanly as now they do? No; they are waiting for the adoption. What is that? To wit, the redemption of the body; the time when their bodies shall be redeemed from under all the evils by which they are now, continually, from time to time infested, and

by which, they are debased, and made mean, and vile, as they are called "vile bodies," Phil. iii. 28, or the bodies of our humiliation. As if he should have said, What? Do you think that the sons of God, when they are manifested, and declared to be his sons, shall dwell so meanly as now they do, in such cottages as these, such vile bodies as these? No; we groan within ourselves, (under the present pressures, while we are in these bodies,) waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies from under all those evils that make them so mean and inglorious things, and so unsuitable to the state of the sons of God. And if we consider those nearer evils, which partly we suffer in these bodies, that is, whereof they are the immediate subjects, and which partly we suffer by our being in them, they ought to have that pungency with them to our sense, as to awaken hope in us, if there be any such thing, and if we have any ground of it in view.

1. For the former sort of these evils, which we suffer in these bodies, to wit, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; truly, while we have the prospect of a better state than that, and the hope of it in view, it is mean, and vile, and unworthy, not to have that hope of it live, and be often excited, and raised up in us; for what infirm things are these bodies? How much infirmity do they suffer in themselves? How are these earthly tabernacles shattered from day, to day? Shaken with agues, burnt with fevers, drowned with dropsies, harrassed and torn in pieces with stones, stranguaries, cholics, and such kind of painful diseases? Though these are lesser things, they are not nothing. The sons of God are to wait in hope, and with groans, (groans full of hope, not of despair,) for the adoption; that is, the redemption of these bodies, and are in great part to be saved by this hope; it is the hope of a better state, even in this respect, which must draw us off from the present bodily state.

What we feel is not enough, if we do not hope too, for though we feel very great grievances and pressures in these bodies, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; yet, notwithstanding, we are so much naturally in love with this flesh, and this bodily state, that we shall rather endure all this, than change, if we have not a better hope in view; if our souls be not erected, and raised up within us, to consider, What! I was not made for an eternal inhabitation in such a body as this; and though I am to be patient of an abode in it, I must not be fond of it; I must

endure it, but not take pleasure in it, when I know it belongs to me as an inheritance; and as I am an adopted one, one of God's sons, to be otherwise provided for, in point of habitation hereafter. "We know, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore "we groan within ourselves, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon." They are not so much groans of sense, as of hope: though they are excited, and raised by sense at first, they are heightened and improved by hope. If it were not for hope, we should groan like beasts under such a burden; but when we have so great hope in view before us, that doth quite change the nature of these groans, and maketh them, not only rational, but holy ones; groans of men, and groans of saints, to wit, for such a bodily state, or such a state, as to these bodies, as wherein we shall be more capable of serving and enjoying the blessed God for ever, the great object of our worship and hope. But then,

2. For the evils which we suffer by our being in these bodies, they are of a far higher nature than those that we suffer immediately in them, or whereof they are the immediate subjects themselves. How mighty an influence hath the very temper of these bodies upon our minds, to pervert, corrupt, and deprave them, to bring in upon us, and to continue and renew from time to time in us, whatsoever is most pernicious and prejudicial to the nature, and the proper, and the genuine operations of an intelligent, immortal spirit. For,

(1.) It is by our being in these bodies, that our minds are diverted from those noble employments and exercises, wherein we should be continually taken up about higher things; these very bodily senses, which let in divine light and glory upon us, let in vanity, and befool and betray us from day to day; so that we have cause to complain, (as a worthy person whom I knew did,) Oh! how are we deafened by these ears of ours? and how are we blinded by these eyes of ours? that we cannot hear the voice of God calling us to heaven, to his eternal kingdom and glory; that we cannot behold the divine light that shines through all things! How are we, by these very senses of ours, made insensible, may we truly say? To our very tastes, the best and most valuable things are rendered tasteless, and without savour and relish to us. This is what we do immediately owe to these very bodies, and our bodily abode,

our being confined for this time to these bodies. And again,

(2.) Not only are our minds diverted, but darkened by an influence from these very bodies, in very great measure, so as that all our apprehensions of things, which are of a spiritual and divine nature, they have a terrene tincture upon them; our thoughts are gross, our conceptions are carnal, they smell and savour of the earth in which we dwell, and which makes up our house and habitation for us, incloseth these intelligent, immortal spirits of ours. While it encloses them, it imparts a terrene tincture to them, and makes all our thoughts and conceptions of things gross, earthly, and carnal, like themselves, in which these souls of ours are rather indeed prisoners than inhabitants. And,

(3.) Hence it is also, that our affections become alienated from divine and spiritual things, and in so great a measure, dead to them. The things of this earth we can savour, bodily things we can affect, we can love them, we can desire them, we can delight in them; but things that are of a divine and heavenly nature, towards these we are all dead. A total death passeth, and binds every affection of our souls, till divine grace comes to shew what miracles it can work. Saith God, I can make a clod of clay love me, I can put the tincture of heaven even upon earth itself. Till (I say) a divine, almighty power be exerted, every thing that is of a spiritual and heavenly nature will be disaffected perpetually by us. I can taste no sweetness in any such thing, might the poor soul be forced to say, even from its own continual experience, and often renewed trials of itself. They that are after the flesh, will only savour the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit: and it is only the exertion of Almighty power, by the Divine Spirit, that gives victory to our spirits, so as that they shall not be always under the dominion of the fleshly principle; where these spirits come to recover their own dominion, where light, and reason, and judgment, come to be efficacious, and to have their proper power and government restored.

It is by the influence of the Divine Almighty Spirit, that any are regenerated into this state, otherwise we should be mere compositions of flesh, and nothing else, as is expressed concerning the state of unregenerate men, compared with the state that they are brought into by regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh;" (speaking of whole human nature,) it is but flesh; "but that which is born of the

Spirit, is spirit." John iii. 6. There is nothing in us (as it were) that doth deserve the name of spirit, till such time as the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit comes to be exerted, and put forth in us: that, indeed, will create something in us that is fit to be called spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:" there is spirit producing, and spirit produced; otherwise, and not till then, a man deserves to be called nothing but a lump of flesh, and so towards things that are spiritual and divine, there is no inclination at all. But then,

(4.) There is strong and unitive propension in these souls of ours, and by their abode in this flesh, to those things that are terrene and carnal, of a nature like their own. And that completes the wretchedness of our case, that to all things that are most suitable to us, we are dead; but to those that are most unsuitable, and farthest beneath us, to them only we live, to them we are alive: and it is a miraculous work of divine power and grace to make it be otherwise with us, while we are in these bodies. This is that which is certainly to be considered by us with the bitterest regret. Have I that affection in my nature, that is capable of being placed upon God, upon heaven, and upon unseen glory? And what? Is it drawn down by this bodily abode, and union with this body, to terrene and earthly things? Into what agonies should it put us to think of this? Have I that love in my nature, that is capable of uniting to my highest and best good, and instead of that, doth it only unite me with a clod, with a piece of clay, with this base and impure earth? How unsufferable a thing, how little to be be borne by them, who understand themselves, to be born of God! and who, though they are to live awhile in these bodies, yet it is but a life that hovers continually upon the shadow of death, a kind of dying life, they are (as it were) between death and life. Life there is, and that life, if it be, or wherever it is, will commence, will be eternal life at length. But in what a faint image, in the mean time, and in what a continual struggle, so that there is always reason for those outcries, "Oh, wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this this death?" That pathetical self-bemoaning of the Apostle suits our common case, though we have not that sense of it, that he expresseth, Rom. vii. 24.

Now mark the connection. What we have hinted to us of this sad present state of our case, doth immediately precede here. We are groaning with the rest of a groaning world,

that are all in travailing pangs, being subjected in hope unto vanity, and corruption, and bondage. "We also that have received the first fruits of the Spirit," we are groaning too, with the rest of the world, "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body," when we shall dwell like the children of God. It is our consideration of the wretchedness of our present case, in these respects, that must awaken hope in us, and make the exercise of it more lively and vigorous: that the being gradually habituated to so low, and mean, and abject a state as this is, may not quite sink us, as it must do, if hope be not kept alive, and maintained in us; an hope, that though things are in these respects very sad and grievous, yet they shall be better; the case shall be mended; we shall be in a better world, and in better bodies than than these are; bodies that shall have more favourable influences upon intelligent minds and immortal spirits, or less noxiousness than these bodies have.

That is the second direction; with the representation which we have of the heavenly state, let us consider and inspect the wretchedness of our present state on earth, as we dwell in this lower world, and as we dwell in such bodies as these that we now inhabit. And,

Direction 3. That this hope may be cherished, and kept alive in us, to our actual salvation, let us carefully avoid unsuitable and unscriptural, horrid thoughts of God, upon whom this hope of ours must terminate. Nothing will so depress and stifle this hope, upon the influence whereof so much depends, as to have black, and dark, and horrid thoughts of God, beyond and contrary to what his own representation of himself in his word gives ground for. Now nothing is more natural than,

1. For persons that are yet altogether in their sins, impure creatures throughout, to represent to themselves an impure deity. Nor again,

2. Is there any thing more natural, when souls begin to be a little awakened, and stirred to mind their own concernments, than to entertain and admit thoughts of an horrid and dreadful being, which they put the name of God upon, and which (as they know God is to be the object of their worship) they clothe with such apprehensions of him, as makes their worship savour of nothing else but a kind of dread, that always possesses their spirits, so as that they worship only like slaves; not like the children of God, not like his sons, but as those that are afraid of a tormenting lash perpetually; that are allured by no love, no goodness,

no kindness, no apprehension of his love. And nothing doth more directly tend to destroy the hope that should be in us, and whereby we are to live.

And pray do but consider this one passage, "Be not thou a terror to me; thou art my hope in the evil day." Jer. xvii. 17. I only note it to shew the inconsistency of these two things, God's being a terror to us, and his being our hope. While we make him a terror to ourselves, we cannot make him our hope: the prophet prayeth, "Be not a terror to me," for then my hope in thee is lost, thou art to be my only hope in an evil day. And what will become of me, if he that is to be my hope, should be my terror? and if that be a thing so much to be deprecated, that God do not make himself a terror to us, truly it ought to be avoided, our making him a terror to ourselves; and for the same reason; because he is our only hope, and he cannot be our hope, while he is a terror to us. And then,

Direction 4. The next direction will be, that which I hinted at the last time, and I told you upon what occasion, to wit, that we maintain in ourselves a just love to our own souls, and a desire of their salvation. This the series of the discourse naturally leads to; and I have found it necessary to speak very distinctly to it, as having met with bills, once and again, that suggest this case; a fear that all that is done, in a way of obedience, should be from a motive of self-love, and a desire and design of their own salvation; and not so principally, for the glory of God therein. Now what I shall say to this, will lie under these two general heads.

1. To evince to you, from the ground in the text, ("We are saved by hope,") that there ought, and must be in us a principle of self-love, to wit, love to our own souls maintained, and kept in exercise all along. And,

2. I shall say somewhat to the doubt, and shew whether this self-love be the principal mover, yea or no, of hope in these souls; or how they may yet discern that it is not the principal mover. For the

1. That there ought to be such a principle of love to our own souls, that must be exercised in us, through the whole of our course, upon the very ground here expressed in the text, that "We are saved by hope," consider the following things.

(1.) If there be not such a love to our own souls, that shall put us upon this earnest desire and endeavour of their salvation, there can be no hope of it; for there is no hope of that, which we desire not. What a man desires not, he

cannot hope for; therefore hope with reference to the business of our salvation, would be simply impossible, naturally impossible, if there were no such love to ourselves, or to our own souls, as should make us to desire salvation; for that which we desire not, it is naturally impossible we should hope for. And,

(2.) Supposing such love to ourselves as should make us desire our own salvation were an unlawful thing, it would by consequence make the hope of our salvation an unlawful thing too: and so to say, we are to be saved by hope, were to be saved by a sin, and the whole business of our salvation were to be carried on continually by a continued sin, through the whole of our course; than which, you may easily apprehend, nothing could be imagined or spoken more absurd.

(3.) We are bound to endeavour, in hope, the preservation of the health and life of these bodies: and much more are we to endeavour, in hope, the eternal life and salvation of our souls.

(4.) We should in our whole course (if we should make it our business to suppress such desire and hope as this) counteract the law of our own nature; and we must know the law of our own nature is God's own law: he that is the Author of our nature is the Author of the law of nature; and there is no principle more natural to us than love of ourselves. And,

(5.) We should not only contradict the law of original nature, but we should act against the continual dictates of the new nature, wherein the principle of this self-love is a governing thing. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not." 1 John iii. 18. He loves his own life, is careful for his own life; he keepeth himself, that he may avoid mortal touches from the evil one, who is continually seeking to destroy that precious life, that is now from God himself sprung up in the soul, and in respect whereof he is now said to be born of God. And again,

(6.) It were quite to subvert the whole gospel constitution, which doth apply itself directly to the principle of self-love in the whole dispensation of it, as supposing that natural to men, and that they should be unnatural, and monsters towards themselves, if they act not according to it. What mean all the gospel invitations, and promises, and threatenings, but to apply themselves immediately and directly to the principle of self-love in men, apprehending that they

should have some regard to themselves, and to the concernments of their own souls? It supposeth this, when our Lord breathes forth such sweet and alluring invitations as those; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. latter end. What would that signify, if a man were not to desire rest for his own soul, and life and blessedness for his own soul? "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life; incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah lv. 1. What would all this signify, if I were not to take care for, and desire the life of my own soul? And so also all the threatenings of the gospel were lost upon men, if they were to have no dread of perishing; and no hope, no desire, of being eternally saved. "He that believeth, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." All these were thrown away upon them, who were not to allow themselves, either in a desire or dread, in reference either to the death or life of their souls. But then,

2. To answer the doubt, I will only say these things very briefly to you; that is, whether self-love be the predominant principle, so that any have reason to think all their obedience proceeds from self-love, more than from a desire of God's being glorified in their salvation. Why,

(1.) I would desire such to consider, that the blessedness of heaven doth very principally lie in perfect sinlessness, in being perfectly free from sin. And so, in being as perfectly like God, as we are capable: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. That implies perfect sinlessness; consider that in the first place. And,

(2.) Sin is the only thing by which God can be dishonoured. "In breaking the law, dishonourest thou God." Rom. ii. 13. He can be dishonoured by nothing but sin. And,

(3.) Let such consider, do they desire perfect sinlessness? yea or no: and let them deal faithfully with their souls in that particular. Do I desire to be perfectly free from sin? or do I hate every thing of sin, so as to long for nothing more, than perfectly to be free from it? Let their own conscience give an answer to them concerning this, whether they can sincerely say, they do desire nothing so much as perfect freedom from sin; they do desire to be rid of that, by which alone they do dishonour God. And you must know, that sin, in the very nature of it, is more dishonour-

able to God, than it can be hurtful unto them: it is both dishonourable to God and hurtful to us; but the principal thing is a dishonour to God, as it is against him first. It is against us but secondarily, and in the lowest place. Let them then bethink themselves; suppose sin did not hurt me, yet do I not hate it, and do not I desire to be perfectly free from it, as a thing that dishonours God, and as it inclines me to dishonour him? And it is an uncreaturely thing, as it is a vile thing, to have that in me which is an opposition and contrariety in its own nature to the Best of beings, the most perfect and most excellent of beings. And then,

(4.) That the blessedness of heaven further lies in the soul's entire satisfaction, and acquiescence in God, which is the thing we mean by enjoying him. Fruition is the soul's rest. The blessedness of the heavenly state lies in the soul's perfect rest and acquiescence in God, as the best and most satisfying good. And hereby it is plain, that we honour him the most that we are capable of doing, for if the soul do perfectly rest satisfied in God, as the best and most excellent good, we do thereby voluntarily acknowledge him in the most significant (to wit, in a practical) way, to be, (what really he is, as he is God,) the best good, the most comprehensive, and the most absolutely perfect good. The soul doth most honour him, in enjoying him, more than it is capable of doing any other way; for my continual enjoying him, to wit, my continual rest and satisfaction in him, as the best good, is my practical owning him as such. And that is honouring him, when I draw off from all things else, and say, You are not good enough, you have not that excellency in you that is suited to the nature, excellency, and capacity of my soul. Then you betake yourself to God, and there you eternally acquiesce, and take up your satisfaction and rest. This is to confess, actually and practically, that he is all that, which all the creation besides is infinitely short of to you. And so to do, is to glorify and honour him, the most that you are capable of as creatures. In our enjoying him, we glorify him most. And then, lastly,

(5.) As that which is so clear and sure (as I think) to put all out of doubt, if any can say that they hate sin, as the worst of all evils that can exist, or be in being; and do love God as the best of all good, as can also exist, and be in being: this hatred of sin as the worst evil, and this love of God as the best and highest good, must proceed from the operation of his own Spirit; none could ever hate sin

as the worst of evils, and love God as the best of goods, but by the peculiar operation of the Holy Ghost. Now if the Holy Ghost does produce these great effects in any, you may be sure he can do God no wrong in these productions of his: he governs his own productions equally. The Spirit of God can never be the author of any one's doing God wrong. That you should desire a good for yourself, more than for glory to him, when such operations in you, as hatred of sin, and love of God, do proceed from his own Spirit, that Spirit will never be the author of irregular motions, so as that you should desire your own felicity more than the glory of God.

And, therefore, though these things lie mixed in you, there is love to God, and love to yourselves: and there ought to be both, but you cannot tell which is predominant, by an immediate inspection and view of the effects; look to your cause, and these effects could proceed from no other cause, but the operation of the Divine Spirit; that is, you could never hate sin, but from the Spirit of God. You find that you do hate it, but you do not know whether it be because it is most dishonourable to God, or because it is hurtful to you: yet, I say, your hatred of it proceeds from the Spirit of God. And again, you do love God, but so love yourselves, and your own salvation, that you have one interest in the matter: you love him, in order to your enjoyment of him; you love him, in order to your fruition of him, which is a good to yourselves, and so it ought to be. But you know not which desire is more predominant, which you desire or covet more, that you may be happy, or God be glorified in your fruition of him; I say, this supreme love to God is not the work of your own spirit, you could not love God above all, (if it were even for your own enjoyment of him only,) but by the help of his Spirit. And the Spirit of God, when that is immediately at work, will be sure to do right between him and you. It will not let you love yourselves more than God, when that love is the immediate production of that Spirit, living and acting in you. And we can be surer of nothing than we are of this, that there can be no hatred of sin, as the worst of evils, nor love of God, as the best of goods, but from the Divine Spirit. And if it be from a Divine Spirit, that Spirit will not be the author of so irregular a motion in us, that we should design ourselves, more than him, in these things. And so much I take to be exceeding clear and plain, in reference to this doubt; and it is very unreasonable that any should trouble

themselves much about it, but fall admiring and blessing God, that hath made them hate sin as the worst of evils, and a thing by which he is dishonoured; and to love God as the best good, which is as inseparable from the eternal enjoyment of him, as that enjoyment is from their eternal adoring and glorifying of him in that state. There are many other directions remaining, but no more at present.

SERMON XXVII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Now to go on, the next direction to be given is,

Direction 5. Ponder well and thoroughly the capacities of your own natures. I know not what should do more to raise and cherish this hope in you, of which the text speaks, for you have been told it doth not speak of hope, as hope; to wit, all hope. There is an hope (as was said) that is so far from saving men, that it destroys them. There are many that are ruined, and not saved by their hope; but it is the truly Christian hope terminating to the last end of it, in a glorious eternity that we are to be saved by; that which is truly the hope of salvation, and which is spoken of under the notion of an helmet, the seat of counsel and design; and it is impossible there can be any design for salvation, without hope; or indeed any design at all, whereof there is no hope; and therefore I say, in order to the heightening, and improving of this hope, the truly Christian hope, it is of the greatest necessity and use imaginable, to study much the capacity of our own natures; to wit, often to recount with ourselves, what is such a creature as I, an human creature, capable of? What are the limits and bounds of my capacity, the capacity of my nature?

Nothing will be plainer, (if it be considered,) than that our natures are capable of greater, and more enduring things, than ordinarily we employ our minds about. The usual exercise of our minds is far from reaching the capa-

* Preached November 8, 1691.

city of our natures: from any body that allows himself to think, this acknowledgment will be extorted, at the first sight or hearing, that spiritual things are greater, more excellent, and more noble, than earthly and carnal things are. And do not we find there is a capacity in our natures of conversing with such things? Are our natures capable of conversing with nothing but earth and clay? Can they look no higher? Can we form no notions of objects of a more noble and excellent kind?

And they are capable of more enduring things than we employ them about, that is, of eternal things; nay, so far it is from us to be incapable of having any thought of eternal things, that if we could impose upon ourselves, we cannot possibly avoid that thought; our minds will run into an endless and eternal scheme, do we what we can; that is, we cannot so much as by a thought fix to ourselves any utmost bounds, or periods of things; and therefore, our minds do naturally run into eternity. And more than that, we are not only capable of knowing much of spiritual, and eternal things, things that are more noble and excellent in their kind, and more lasting in duration, than the things are which we commonly employ them about.

But we are capable of understanding this higher and larger capacity; we are secretly conscious to ourselves, that there is nothing terrene and temporary, that can measure the capacity of our nature, and fill up, and correspond to it; every man is conscious to himself of this, that allows himself to think; we are not only capable of knowing that there are spiritual things above the sphere of sense, and eternal things above the bounds and limits of time; but we are capable of knowing that we know it; to wit, we are conscious to ourselves of the greater and larger capacity of our natures.

And that being supposed, truly it must be said of us, we know too much, to enjoy no more. If we are not to hope for more, we know too much; we know that there is a glorious sphere of spiritual objects, that lie above the reach of our sense; we know there is an eternal state beyond the bounds and limits of time; and knowing this, we know too much, if we are not to hope for more. And if that indeed were the state of our case, that we are to hope for no more than what lies within the compass of our present state, it might make a mere philosopher to curse his nature, that ever it should be capable of prospect, that ever I was a creature capable of prospect, and yet so doomed and con-

fined to the strait and narrow bounds of this base earth as to have nothing to enjoy, higher and greater, than this can afford me. Study the capacity of your nature, and think with yourselves, this immortal mind and spirit that I have in me, is it to be supposed it could have been put into me only to sustain a mean, vile flesh, that after the greatest and utmost care, must at length rot in the dust? Had I a reasonable immortal soul put into me, only to enable me to eat and drink, to please and indulge sense? A brute is furnished for such purposes as these, as well as I.—What? Did I need a mind, an intelligent mind, an immortal mind, for such purposes as these?

A man may confirm it himself, that he is not in a dream about the larger capacity of his own nature; for when he finds he hath in him a mind, is that a dream? Do not I know, I can know? Do not I understand, that I can understand? And that I have that in me that can think? And I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought, and a clod of clay? Between a mind, and a piece of earth? That the capacity of this mind should be filled up with any earthly thing, what proportion is there in that?

And then, that this mind of mine must be an immortal thing, and so exist in an eternal state; I cannot be in a dream about this; for I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and death? Is it a likely thing, that a thing that can think, can die? If I have that in me that can think, I have that in me that cannot die.

And then, reckon it unworthy to hope beneath the capacity of your nature; to let your ordinary hope, the hope that is to live in you, and guide your course, to let that (I say) sink beneath the capacity of your nature. And again,

Direction 6. Consider much, the large and immense goodness and benignity of the divine nature; and do not think it agreeable to that, (as it is certain it cannot be,) that there should be such a sort of creatures endowed with a spiritual, immortal mind, that should not be accommodated and suited with proportionable objects. Consider the goodness of God to this purpose, as it appears in other instances. You see that all other sorts of creatures he doth accommodate with suitable objects. Look to yourselves, consider his goodness to you in other respects all your time hitherto. He is that God (as good Jacob when dying said) "that hath fed me all my life;" through him you were born, and through him you have lived; did he give you the

appetite of meat and drink, and hath he not given you meat and drink too? If he hath given you faculties in your inferior nature, he hath assigned you their particular suitable objects. And do you think that if he hath given you also rational and immortal minds, it could stand with so vast goodness, not to suit them with proportionable objects too? Is that like his other methods? When the whole earth is full of his goodness, this region, this seat of apostacy, and wickedness, all the creatures looking up to him with craving eyes, and he satisfies them all: therefore it cannot be on his part that ever there should be such a flaw, such a defect, in the order of things in his creation, that he should have made an intelligent, immortal mind and spirit, and never have provided for it a suitable good, that may answer the capacity of his nature; and you already know, that there is no terrene, or temporary thing, that is a suitable good to it.

And thence it cannot but be, (for the matter must not be refunded upon the Creator,) I say it cannot but be, that if souls be miserable, it must be by themselves; their aversion from God, their refusal to return to him, their resistance of the methods he hath used for the gathering back of wandering souls: they will not return, they love earth and vanity more; and if this, indeed, be the habitual temper of any soul under that gospel, which is designed on purpose for recovering and reducing souls unto God, and this disaffection of theirs cannot be overcome, this is the highest provocation that can be given to goodness itself; and goodness itself must most highly justify and gratify itself in the ruin of those souls, who have had the offers made them of a suitable correspondent good, but lived all their days, while here in the flesh, in the refusal, and contempt, and defiance, of these offers. And again,

Direction 7. Consider the confirmation that God hath so expressly given of his special good-will to his own, besides what may be collected of his common goodness towards the generality of his creatures; think how he has confirmed to them, that are become peculiarly his, his peculiar kindness, and favour; and their right and title to that heavenly inheritance which they are finally to hope for: he hath sundry ways confirmed it to them.

1. By their regeneration; by which he hath in a great measure cured (to wit, in a prevalent degree) the depravity of their sensualized nature. And even in the work of regenerating them, begotten them to this very hope, or to the

hope of this very state. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope." 1 Peter i. 3. To what living hope, or the living hope of what? Why, "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us." It is true, you had a capacity in your natures, of higher, and greater things than this earth affords; but what signified a mere natural capacity, that was overwhelmed with vicious inclinations when there was a capacity of greater things, but no habitude? But now there is a gracious habitude in the work of regeneration, added to the natural capacity, which repairs the natural powers to those exercises, which that capacity comprehends and means. The understanding is, in some measure, rid of the cloudy darkness that hovered oft over it before: "They that were darkness" in this work of regeneration: are made "light in the Lord." Eph. v. 8. They are become light:—they were dead in trespasses and sins; here is a divine life made to spring up in them, that aims at God, that aims at heaven, that aims at immortal things; and whatever is born, must be fed; here is a new creature born, that cannot be fed at the common rate, how should this heighten, and raise hope?

2. He hath taken them into union with his own Son, who is the primary great heir, and in whose right they come to be sons, and so come to be heirs; how should this raise hope in me? I am taken into union with the Son of God. If you receive him you are so; that is the *amplexus* of the soul; that faith by which the soul receives him, thereby it comes to be adjoined to him, and so to be invested secondarily with his right. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John i. 12. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." If you share with him in the sonship, then you share with him in the inheritance too. You have a right, even as the sons of God, to this inheritance; this heavenly state, in all the blessedness and glory of it belongs to you by right of inheritance; or as you are heirs of it, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," and so you are to be glorified with him: and what? Are you not to hope for your own inheritance? That which doth belong to you by right of inheritance, are you not to live in the hopes of it? And,

3. There is God's special promise superadded to all this; to wit, that he will give grace and glory; and that the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it

entered into the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love him." And,

4. He hath added his oath to his promise, that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation from the two immutable things, the promise and the oath superadded, by which, it is impossible for God to lie. Heb. vi. 17, 18. And why should not hope live and flourish, in reference to this inheritance, the heavenly state you are finally to look for upon all this? therefore, take that for a further direction, often to recount with yourselves the express confirmations and assurances, which God hath given of his special kindness to his own, and of their right to the heavenly inheritance. And again,

Direction 8. Often renew your covenant with God, that so this hope may be cherished and live in you. Renew your covenant with God often, by which he becomes yours, and you his; by which he once became so, that so you may have a constant, explicit notion, or apprehension of him, as such; that you may not look towards him as a stranger, as an unrelated one. There is nothing needful to make him yours, and you his, but this mutual agreement by covenant between him and you. The matter is unalterable on his part; and you may be sure that nothing is more requisite on your part; nothing can be more requisite, than that you often commune with yourselves about this matter; Do I stand to my covenant? I once said I was willing that God in Christ should be mine, and that I in Christ should be his; am I still willing? Do I stand to this covenant with God in Christ; yea or no?

Then consider, whence are your expectations to be? I am not to have my great expectations from a stranger, from a strange god, but from a God of my own. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he that shall be our guide even unto death." Psalm xlviii. last verse. How great a thing is it to be able to say, "God, even our own God shall bless us." Psalm lxvii. 6. Your hope will languish if you let the apprehension dwindle of the relation between God and you; so that you look not towards him from day to day, and at all times, as a God related to you, upon the terms, and by the tenor, of an everlasting covenant; how wisely will that man look about him in his wants, and in his languishings, that hath no one to expect help and relief from? From one no more than from another? That is, if all about him, or with whom he is to expect, are equally strangers to him, and he can have no more expectation

from one than from another. To hear of the name of God, that he is a great God, a bountiful God, and that there is an immense fulness of goodness in him; but what is that to me, when I have no concern with him, nor he with me? But when you know, that there is nothing requisite, to bring about a fixed relation between him and you, but your consenting to the terms of his covenant; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." Ezek. xvi. 8. If that be from time to time recognized, be made more and more explicit, then are you to walk in this sense from day to day. This God is my God, and I am his. And then what may you not hope for? What may you not expect from him, in reference to present support, and final blessedness? And again,

Direction 9. Keep up a continual intercourse with God hereupon, walk with him if he be yours and you be his, and that is ascertained by a sure covenant often recognized; then accordingly, walk with him continually, keep up an intercourse by acts of reverence, and trust, and love, and subjection; so is the intercourse to be kept up, for you must consider, it is not an intercourse *inter pares*, between equals; but it is an intercourse between an all-sufficient God, a self-sufficient God, a sovereign Lord and Ruler, and a mean indignant object, and (who ought to be) a subject creature; and so only ought the intercourse to be kept up. "As the Father loveth me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." John xv. 9, 10. And so are we directed to keep ourselves in the "love of God." Jude, verse 21. This is the way to maintain hope, waiting for his mercy by Christ Jesus to life eternal. Be in his fear all the day long, keep your hearts in a subject frame and posture towards him; keep you in a depending frame; keep you in a complacential frame, always apt and ready to exert acts of love, kindness, and good-will towards God. Oh, that I could do more for thee! I love thy name, thy honour, thy interest, thy presence, thy communion. In this way let intercourse with God be kept up, and so hope will flourish, will do its part towards the saving of you; even the saving you out of the gulph in which you now lie, almost swallowed up, only to be saved by this hope, such an hope as is subservient and conducing thereunto. Again,

Direction 10. If such an intercourse should be intermitted, (as can never be, but by slips and failings on your part,)

hasten the restoring of it. As you value the life of your hope, and as you value the life of your souls, hasten the restoring of it. That is not to be borne, for one to say, Now the intercourse ceaseth between God and me; What? that there should be a discontinuance of my commerce with God, this is not to be borne. Oh! hasten to get all rectified, and set aright, by renewed applications of the blood of Jesus; by speedy and serious turning to God with all the heart, and with all the soul. By any such more observable slips hope hath got a wound, and it is to be healed, recovered, redintegrated, by such a return; your return to God in Christ speedily and betimes.

Direction 11. After that walk more "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," as knowing you are to live and be saved by hope; and your hope is to live, and be maintained by your continual commerce with God. Walk accurately according to the gospel instructions; to wit, according to the instructions and teachings of appearing grace. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, teaching us, what? that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we do live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;" and what is the consequent hereupon? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, as being taught effectually by the grace that hath appeared bringing salvation, Oh, deny "all ungodliness," and every thing of ungodliness; deny it as an abhorred thing, as a most abominable thing. What? Should I bear an ungodly frame of heart to him, whose grace hath appeared to save me? And all "worldly lusts;" shall worldly lusts rule in me, and govern me, who am a disciple of grace, and under the teachings of grace? And it teaches me to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Oh! let us comply with these teachings, when we see what will be the end of it, what will follow, then we shall live "looking for the blessed hope;" how reviving will our own hope be to us then! How full of vigour, how full of sweetness, and how full of power, and life! Every thought of that blessed state will even bless our souls, and make them flourish as a field that the Lord hath blessed. And,

Direction 12. Converse much with them that have the same hope that you have. That is a very heart strengthening thing, mightily animating, to have much conversation with them that will give you a reason of the hope that is in them, "with meekness and fear;" 1 Peter iii. 15. and to

whom also, you may give a reason of the hope that is in you, with the same meekness, and the same fear. That is fruitful, edifying conversation, to converse with them that will interchange accounts with you of the reason of their hopes, which you can give them, and they can give you. But if there be any that care not for that society, that can take a thousand times more pleasure to talk two or three hours over a glass of wine in a tavern, with impertinent, idle fellows, from whom there is nothing of good to be gotten; this is that they rather choose, which they can savour, can take complacency in; but all discourses about God and the things of God, and the world to come, and the matters of an eternal hope, are unsavoury and unpleasant. If this be with any an habitual frame, from week to week, and from month to month, and from year to year, and yet they will tell you they hope to be saved; oh! the monstrous stupidity of these wretched souls! What are they sunk into, and that under this very gospel, which makes all things so very plain!

I tremble to think of the case of such, when they have nothing at all to keep off terrors from their hearts, but either a present peremptory refusal to think, I will think of no such thing; or the vain hope of a death-bed repentance at last, that shall expiate for so sensual and unchristian a life. I tremble (I say) to think what the case of such men will be at last. They may have some confidence in a death-bed repentance at a distance, while they put off from them the evil day; but that repentance may be far fled, removed, and hid from their eyes, when the dying hour is come, and when they are stretched out on the bed of sickness, and languishing. And will God overthrow his own design, merely to comply with the brutish inclination of this or of that man, when his design is to have a people in this world, that shall in their continual, holy, heavenly, conversation, testify against the wicked conversation of it? But he shall dispense with them, and let them live like so many brutal sots all their days, and save them at last, because they say they will repent upon a dying bed; but how such will dare to die, God knows; when in the mean time they hardly dare to come to an ordinance of God, but make all the shift they can, to avoid serious and searching preaching; and think it a great gain to them, if they can this or that day avoid a blow. Thou that hast lived so long in the indulgence of sensual and brutish inclinations, that art afraid to come to a sermon, or come to the Lord's table; or the

like guilt stares thee in the face; how wilt thou not be afraid to die, and to appear at last before the tribunal of thy judge? Will God alter his gospel for you, and determine that a man may live an earthly and carnal life in this world, and be saved at last; though he hath told us, that they who mind earthly things (the gust and relish of their souls lies there, they savour them), their end is destruction, and they are enemies to the cross of Christ? They counter design the end of Christ's dying, and so their end is destruction. And I add,

Direction 13. Take heed of too impatient a sense of the tediousness of your expecting state, while you are expecting: we must be expectants here; we are saved by hope. There needs a great deal of patience; not only in order to bearing, but in order to expecting; not only in order to the bearing of evil things, but in order to the expecting of good things: "ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." Heb. x. 36. And see what immediately follows the text; "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it:" so we read of "the patience of hope," 1 Thess. i. 3. as that which the apostle blesseth God for, on the behalf of those Thessalonian Christians, having heard of their patience of hope, how cheerfully they did endure in an expecting state. And,

Direction 14. Labour to fortify yourselves against the fear of death, that so your hope may live and flourish. That inasmuch as the final object of your hope lies beyond time, and beyond this present world; it is a sad thing there should be that gulph between you and the last object of your hope, which you dare not shoot; but are afraid of that which you supremely are to hope for. How very uncomfortable a case is that, that the highest matter of your hope should be also the matter of your fear, the going into that estate wherein mortality is to be swallowed up of life? What? Are we afraid of becoming immortal? To be angels' fellows, equal with the angels of God, gathered up to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? Are we afraid indeed of that which we are chiefly to hope for? Oh! labour to overcome that fear; know that Christ died for this end, that you might do it. He was partaker of flesh and blood, he took a human body as we have here; that "by death, he might destroy

him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

It is not only an uncomfortable, and an unchristian, but it is an irrational thing, and an unmanly thing, to live under the continual dominion and government of the fear of that which cannot be avoided. That is irrational; no man can give account of his own reason, why he should do so. It is a scandal even to the reason of a man, to be engaged in a continual contest against impossibilities; that which cannot be avoided, it is impossible I should avoid it. And to be in a constant war with this, is what no man can reconcile to his own understanding, if he do but use the understanding of a man.

And, therefore, there is nothing to be done in the case, but to fall into a speedy union with the great Prince and Lord of life, and then never fear death; that being the state of our case, that this death lies between us, and our great hope, our final hope: when we think what we are to enjoy after death, one would go through a thousand deaths to enjoy that; and much more to die once to escape a thousand deaths. We die here every day; we are killed a thousand times over, from day to day, and from week to week; and if we would die a thousand deaths that way, to avoid one death, sure we may die one death, which we are to suffer unavoidably, that we may enjoy what we are to enjoy afterwards. Then I add,

Direction 15. That if we are to hope for the blessedness of the other state, as our last end, we are to hope too for whatsoever is certainly intermediate to the universal introduction of that state: and, therefore, so far as any better time or state of things in this world is ascertained to us, we are to live in the hope of it, as that which shall antecede our end; for it is the last end that our last hope terminates upon. But then, in the last place,

Direction 16. Take heed of letting your hope ultimately pitch upon any thing but what is itself ultimate; that is, take heed of letting your hope settle upon any thing on this side a blessed, glorious eternity, or upon any other state of things: take heed of having your spirits so deeply engaged upon any better state of things on earth, that you mind less, or with much more coolness, and indifferency, the concernments of the eternal state. Be not so much taken up in the thoughts and expectations of a better scene of things in this lower world, that the very thoughts of hea-

ven, and a blessed eternity, should be unsavoury, and unpleasant.

This is a very grievous, (I might say) a mortal evil; so preposterously doth it invert the course of things; it takes down the supreme end, and substitutes somewhat inferior in the room and stead of that. And though this spiritual distemper may be indulged by many, under a spiritual pretence, I would fain see religion thrive more, and God be honoured and better served in this world: yet there is this to be said to it, it is well, if seriously we desire such things indeed; but if such desires after the best state of things that is supposeable in this world do grow superior to the desires that we have of a perfect, blessed state of things in the other world; this is (I say) to set the means against the end; and so is quite to invert the order of things.

Live in the glorious expectation of eternity; and live also in the comfortable hope, that all things in this world in order thereunto shall be managed suitably and subserviently, by that wisdom that cannot err, or make a false step, and by a power that cannot be resisted, or disturbed: but there is a great deal of carnality under that pretence of spirituality; and hence comes that contestation of interests and parties; party against party, and interest against interest. There will be perpetual quarrels, while all men are not of a mind about things within the compass of time; but in reference to the glory of the eternal state, there can be no possibility of such collision, but all will adoringly and joyfully fall into everlasting adoration and praise.

And this must be the matter of our last hope. And so I shall shut up all with the prayer of the apostle: "Now the God of peace, that hath given us eternal consolation, and good hope through grace, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.

In recommending to you several requisites for a continual course of friendship with Christ, I did not mention that of trust, than which there is not a greater requisite to friendship. But that I intend to be spoken to by itself. And therefore have pitched upon this text. Now to proceed gradually, and in some method. There are four previous things which I shall premise. As 1. Where do we find Abraham to be called the friend of God? for it refers to a former scripture, as fulfilled, that God did treat him as a friend. We find him expressly so called, 2 Chron. xx. 7. There was a numerous, potent enemy that did seek to keep out the people of God from possessing that land which God had given to the seed of Abraham his friend. And Jehoshaphat urgeth this to God in prayer. So we have it again, Isa. xli. 8, where there being an occasion to mention Abraham, he is spoken of also as the friend of God; "But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." But 2. We are to consider and take notice under what notion Abraham is spoken of by that glorious title of the friend of God. It is true he was an eminent saint. But was this spoken of him under that notion? or is it not under a common notion as a believer? So it seems to be in the text. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." This is a notion common to him, and to all believers; and this still must then agree with the rest of believers. Then 3. We are further to consider what sort of faith this was in which Abraham is accounted a righteous person, and called the friend of God. It is plain that that faith did not consist only in believing the general promise of having a numerous seed. It did not terminate on God, abstractly without

a reference to Christ. It did not stand in a cold and ineffectual assent to any divine truth whatsoever—for the whole context shews the insufficiency of such a faith. But to speak to this positively, and briefly, we shall consider the object and nature of this faith. As,

1. For the object of it, is evident that it did comprehend and take in four representations of Christ. How distinct and explicit his understanding thereof was we cannot determine. But he had some notion of it: for our Lord himself saith, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad, John viii. 56. And this must be a truth with us which none can question. And we are told, that very good promised to Abraham did eminently intend that one seed, which was Christ, Gal. iii. 16. And we are there also told, verse 17, that the covenant, that was not at first made but renewed with Abraham, was the covenant of God in Christ. And we are likewise told that this seed of his was to possess the gates of their enemies; and that nations should be blessed in him. So that his mind was directed, that from this seed of his, himself should expect blessedness. And it cannot otherwise be supposed. And ergo, that as the eye was fixed upon Christ, as his seed by promise, and through that to be blessed himself. The prophets themselves did not fully understand their own prophesying of him. Some prophecies they must be supposed to have, though not most distinct and clear to themselves. So we find, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." And,

2. As to the nature or kind of that faith, in reference to the object, it must be such as, according to his understanding of the discovery he had there, must be an embracing of his heart and will towards this object. He doth close with Christ according to the representation he had of him. Christ was the sum and substance of the Gospel—faith in the mind and heart of Abraham, as far as the discovery was made to him.

And now the way is plain to that which I principally intend for the ground of discourse from this text, to wit:

Doctrine. That there is much of friendly commerce between the blessed God and the souls of men in and about

the production and exercise of that faith upon which he counts them righteous, and doth justify, and will finally save them. This is the substance of what I intend to insist upon from the whole of this text. I take it to be clear that Abraham's faith was the same for kind and nature with that by which all believers are justified and saved. And he was called the friend of God. And then I say there is much friendly converse between God and souls in the production and service of that faith which justifies and saves. Now take notice,

1. That I do not consider that discovery of friendship in the single act of faith, but take a further latitude, as to the production and exercising of that faith. There is a friendship in that whole ingratiation between God and souls, when he is about producing, and they about the exercising, of that faith. And again,

2. Take notice, that I do not speak of faith here as justifying only, but of faith as saving also, being led thereto by the context, and by my own design. By the context, which speaks of faith under both notions, as *justifying*, in the words next following. And as *saving*, in the 14th verse: Can such a faith save him? And upon account of my own design, i. e. of discovering the friendship which appears in this matter, which certainly is eminently seen at the last in salvation, as that is the result of all the transactions between God and the soul in these matters. And again,

3. Take notice that hereupon this friendship is not to be considered merely as begun, but as continued unto the last: for friendship doth not lie in a single act, but a state. And ergo, there must be a continued course of friendship, frequent repetitions of such a kind and manner as there was in the inchoation, the beginning of this friendship. There may be intervals of it, after some notable failure on the one part or the other. And there must be somewhat done to the keeping of it on foot throughout; for that it never be totally broken off with them whom the end, the perfection, the consummation of it, shall take place at last, to wit, their final and eternal salvation. And,

4. Further consider this, that wheresoever there is true friendship (admitting it to be called so in the best and proper sense) it must be mutual. A man cannot truly and properly be said to be a friend with an inanimate subject, and there may be a disparity both natural and moral. As I can have no friendship, or there can be no entire and full friendship between me and a stone; so neither can there

be between me and an enemy. Though I may have friendly propensions towards such an one, yet an actual, friendly intercourse there cannot be, if there be an incapacity in the other subject, either natural or moral. Ergo, to speak to the subject of the intercourses of friendship, that are in this transaction between God and the soul in and about this production, and exercising of that faith by which he justifies and saves, it was fit to premise these things. And these things being clear. I am to shew,

I. What there is of a friendly propension on God's part towards the souls of such with whom he so negotiates, in the management and conduct of this matter. And the friendship herein, on his part, appears in general in these two things.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels; and,

2. In friendly performances, or actual communications.

1. In friendly instructions and counsels: so he is a wise friend; as in the other he is a powerful one. His wisdom appears in his instructions and counsels; and his power in his performances and communications; but neither of these exclusively of the other. And,

(1.) It is much of friendly propension, that God discovers to men in bringing about that faith which is justifying, in the friendly instructions and counsels he affords them in order hereunto. And we must take in this, that what as to his purpose he speaks by his word to them, he doth by his Spirit impress upon them. This is as the seal to the wax, which makes and leaves its impress thereon. What he speaks outwardly by his word, he speaks internally by his Spirit, which makes use of the word to enlighten their minds with, and begets correspondent characters on the soul, so as to make the word effectual. And,

He instructs them concerning their undone and miserable state while they remain strangers to him, and enemies against him. He speaks copiously to them of this by his word; and must be understood to speak correspondently hereof by his Spirit. Thou art in a state of separation from me, who am the Author of thy being and blessedness. Thou art insensible of this state, and thou thinkest that thou needest not God, thou canst live without him in the world. Whereas thou art lost, a guilty creature, liable to wrath: and thou art an impotent creature; thou canst not escape or deliver thyself: and what will become of thee, thou hast not righteousness nor strength! It is necessary that the soul do apprehend and feel this, and the misery of his state

while he hath no God, no interest in him, nor righteousness to recommend him to God. Men have not a word to say for themselves in this case. The power of God is engaged against them. Against his justice they can say nothing, and against his power they can do nothing. When there is a design of friendship on foot, then God takes the soul aside, and shews it all this, to convince it. God now brings things home with a strong hand, and makes the soul consider what it may expect, if it continue in a war against Heaven. Then,

(2.) He instructs them (and there is much of friendliness in it) concerning his own reconcileableness to sinners. God declares it in his word, and he speaks it over again to their own ears and hearts. Men will not mind what is said in the word. They might easily see that he is placable and willing to be reconciled; his giving them much of his goodness, and his exercising patience and long suffering towards them, and all this to lead them to repentance. He expostulates the matter with men on plain evidence of the things themselves: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. ii. 4. But he hath spoken out to men in the gospel, wherein he opens his heart, and declares his counsels to them. But all this needs to be spoken to men inwardly. He urgeth and inculcates his mind and will to them; reasons and argues with their souls. Why hast thou not understood all this hitherto? but thou understandest it now that I am a reconcileable God, if thou now fall not in with my method for this end. This is of mighty importance for bringing about such a friendship; for while men apprehend God to be irreconcileable, that will lead them to despair, and be an hell upon earth. But to behold a gospel of grace and reconciliation, and having it set on so as to apprehend the thing indeed, this engageth the intention and mind to consider the terms offered. And then,

(3.) He instructs such souls about the great reconciler and mediator of their peace, into whose hands he hath put all this affair; unto whom they must be beholden, from whom they must receive all that grace that is requisite, either to the changing of the state, or the changing of the frame. And if men be not inwardly and with efficacy instructed concerning all this, the very doctrine of reconciliation itself would very slowly enter against those mighty objections, which it might meet with in a considering mind. For any

one that understood the nature of God, and considered him as a being absolutely perfect, and so apprehended his holiness and his justice to be in the highest perfection in him, as well as his other governing attributes; if one thought should arise in the mind of such a person, about contracting a peace and friendship with his God, Oh, how shall he answer it to himself, when his own mind tells him, *his* nature admits of no change, and my nature, by any power of my own, admits of none. God will not change his nature, and I cannot change mine. This very nature and natural state put me into a posture of direct hostility against his sovereign authority, against his justice, and against his holiness, all at once. If a man in this case hath no way in view how God can consistently with the honour and dignity of his authority and government, and the unalterableness of his eternal law, be reconciled to a sinner, and lead him into communion with himself: here lies an objection in the mind of such an one, against the sum of the gospel, if that were held faith only in general. That is, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners. For what? Is he willing to deny himself? To come down from his throne to quit his government? or is it possible to him to change his nature, to be less just and less holy than he essentially is? But when there cometh to be a distinct explication of the way and method wherein God can honourably, and consistently with his truth, justice, and holiness, be reconciled to sinners; to wit, by the discovery of the doctrine of the Mediator; and when this discovery is inwardly applied and brought home; that which was before a stumbling-block, and a mountain of opposition raised up in the soul against the truth and purpose of the gospel, vanisheth, and the way is plain, smooth, and open to it; and so nothing remains but to fall in with it. But oh, how friendly is this, not only to speak this in an unregarded, external relation, but to speak it internally to the mind and soul, and make it apprehended and understood. To shew unto man his righteousness, who it is that he must be beholden to for all that is requisite for the changing of his state, and for changing his natural frame and inclination, when he must have righteousness and strength. To declare all this by inward, internal light, oh how friendly is this converse! These things are spoken thousands of times over, to the stupid and inadvertent generally, and they never take notice of it. But when he comes to make light, and to shine through that darkness which enwrapt the heart, then

hope begins to take place. Then saith such a soul, "I see it is a feasible thing, a practicable thing that the gospel proposes; I see God hath put the management of all these affairs into such a hand as can at once both reconcile his attributes to one another, and reconcile him to us, and us to him. And then,

(4.) He instructs concerning the way and method of coming to have an interest and part in Christ. So as to have both righteousness and spiritual life in him and by him, i. e. upon being united with him. This is the way; and he instructs the soul that there is not only a fulness of all grace in his Son, from whom they are to receive righteousness, and the regenerating spirit also; but there is a way of coming to be interested in all his fulness, and in that renovating Spirit: and, we then must be united to him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom." Then we are told there must be union. And how is that to be brought about? Why, thou must be in him, in order to this interest and participation from him. This wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, which are in Christ, are nothing to thee that hast no part in him; but his wisdom is thine, his righteousness is thine, his sanctification and redemption thine; but all this upon supposition that thou art in him. There must be such an union in order to that participation. But how is this union brought about? Why, he that is the author of the whole design, is the author of this union; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom." 1 Cor. i. 20. Thus this union must be of God.

But then you must consider this to be very proper and wholesome counsel to you. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." Job xxii. 21. Sue to him for all such counsel as any wise man would take and follow. As Luke xiv. latter end. "Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." This is good counsel, which is secretly prompted unto that. Oh, sinner, sue for peace. Thou canst never, with thy feeble power, oppose and contend in a war against Almightiness itself, that comes armed with terror and vengeance against thee. This cannot be: it is thy way to sue for peace. And we are told in what way God will be reconciled, if ever to

be reconciled; that is, it must be in and by the Mediator. Here is suitable counsel given thee. He counsels thee, Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." You are externally counselled to all this in the gospel. And it may be there are such direct intimations given to minds too; it is likely very often but little regarded. But that such counsel should be given is very friendly. What wilt thou do, thou undone lost creature? Thou hast no clothing, but must appear naked before the divine vindictive justice; nothing to fence thee, nothing to arm thee against the stroke of vengeance. Thou art running on blindly upon thine own ruin. I tell thee where there is eye-salve for thee, and where there is clothing for thee, and where there is every thing that thy necessitous, indigent, undone state requires and needs; I counsel thee to betake thyself to him, to apply to him. This is very friendly counsel. It is friendly in the design and aspect and tendency of it, as it presents itself to thee in the external word; but much more when it is inwardly suggested, when the thing is inculcated inwardly to the mind and heart, and thou art beaten upon by these things, thou art so and so counselled. Why dost thou not hearken to counsel? Why, in such things as these, there appears much of friendship on God's part; that is, in the friendly instructions and counsels which he is pleased to give, especially internally and correspondently, as it must be, with the external revelation of his mind concerning these things.

SERMON XXIX.*

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

2. THE friendship of God appears in his friendly performances and effectual communications. We are to know that his friendly design towards souls doth not terminate here; it reacheth further. That is applicable enough in this case which is spoken in reference to lower and inferior cases in the 15th and 16th verses of this same chapter: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of food, and one

* Preached 24th Sep. 1693.

of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" It would profit as little if God should himself but at the same rate treat men's souls; give them good words, though very apposite and suitable to their case; say to them, Be warmed, be filled, but not give them the things requisite to their souls, what would that profit them? Compare that with 1 John iii. 17, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" What he may shew of kindness and good-will is nothing like the love of God. God's friendly propension towards miserable, necessitous souls, did shew itself at another rate than merely in advising and counselling them, or seeming to wish them well: his friendship exercises itself in the most considerable acts of external benefaction, in doing them good, and rejoicing over them to do them good, "with all his heart and with all his soul," as the expression is, and his own words are. But as to this also, I shall give you instances how this kind of friendship, by way of communication and performance, on God's part appears. As

(1.) That he ingenerates this faith; he works it in us. It is called a "fruit of the Spirit." Gal. v. 22. And it is said to proceed from the "Spirit of faith." 2 Cor. iv. 13. We are told that "by faith we are saved, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8. That faith we are not to take separately and alone: but it heightens the love and gift, that we do believe and are saved by faith, "and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." It is by this faith that the soul is brought into union with his Saviour; by it, it comes to him; by it, they receive him, John i. 12, and it is by this they come to the Son, and to have life. 1 John, v. 11. It is in order hereto, that God the Father is said to draw souls to Christ, and they are said to come to him. John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." What friendliness is this to induce and draw souls to Christ! We must understand that drawing aright. It is not dragging by violence, but as himself expresses it, that, (Hosea xi. 4,) "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." It is by a gentle but effectual allection, drawing you to him; making it by reason and love in conjunction,

to appear to be your interest and concern; and so working on love to yourselves that it may be improved into a love to him too. When they are brought in with a love upon indigency first, they may grow into a love of complacency and highest delight afterwards; one love being the loadstone of another—loving because you are first loved. But look into these acts, and you will see what a friendly design there must be in faith which is produced by union with Christ. By the result of that faith, you will see the kindness of it. There must be friendship in him that will engage my trust when it is nothing to him; he gains nothing by it, but it is necessary and beneficial to me. I do in this case take pains with myself to trust in him, working, but only so as one man may upon another in order thereunto; for they cannot immediately touch, and attract, and turn, and draw hearts. They can but use apt and suitable methods in order hereunto; but if they do that, there is much of kindness in the design: when one takes great pains, and uses industrious endeavours to induce to trust in him, he himself having no advantage by it, but I gain by it the greatest things. That the blessed God should induce and engage souls to trust in him, when it can be of no advantage to him; but he knows that without it they must perish and be lost; when he doth not only invite them to trust in the Lord, stay themselves upon their God, rely upon him and upon that truth and fidelity that never failed any; how friendly is this! To insist on it from time to time, not to give over the soul that hath often neglected him in making these overtures; this is wonderful friendly. To draw the soul into union with Christ, and with himself in and by him; this is to bring such into a state of blessedness. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus," &c. You are foolish creatures, but he will be wisdom to you; you are guilty creatures, but he will be righteousness to you; you are impure creatures, but he will be sanctification to you; you are enslaved creatures, but he will be redemption unto you: all this is of God. And whereas he doth manifestly design to reunite souls to his Son, and by him to himself; how friendly is this design. He intimates hereby that such and such can never be too near to him, or he too close with them. But,

2. This divine friendship appears in his hereupon counting them righteous, and imputing righteousness to them, as the text expresses it: "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." This faith was given Abraham, and thereupon God counts him righteous; and

so he does every believer besides. And is not this a most friendly estimate? is it not to count as a friend, to count us righteous who were far from righteousness? He not only pardons, but accepts as righteous. We should count this wonderful friendship, when we consider our state; we were creatures under a law that cursed every one that "continued not in all things written therein to do them:" and we had broken that whole law, in every part of our duty as to love of God, and our fellow-creatures of the same order. From the depraved nature of man, being carnalized into enmity against God, and hatred one of another, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Rom. viii. 7. This is more than the breach of every command; for my quarrel is not against this or that precept, but against subjection; and so my design is against the divine government: now, is not this friendly when he will thus give faith to such, and reckon and impute righteousness to them? I know there is, as to this, commonly introduced a very unnecessary and trifling dispute. What it is that is counted for righteousness? When the matter comes to be thus stated—is it the act of believing or the object believed on? and the question will be easily answered by putting another question:—Suppose it be asked, What is that which clothes a man?—is it his garment, or his putting it on? Sure, a very ordinary understanding would find no difficulty to answer it. The garment would never clothe a man, if it were not put on: and the action that a man uses in putting on a thing would not have clothed him if he had not the garment: and ergo, these two must contribute together for this end, of being clothed, but in different kinds—it is the garment when put on that clothes him, and the action that is used in putting it on is no part of the clothing, but it was requisite thereunto, and that without which he could not have been clothed. All this is so obvious, that I might save the labour of applying it to the case in hand. What is it upon which a man is counted righteous in the sight of God? Why, he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God puts him on, as it were, so that the scripture phrase is intelligible enough. It is that which is put on which is the matter of this clothing, and the action that is used here is no part of that matter, and yet it is such a requisite as without which he would never be clothed.

What is it upon which a man is counted righteous before God?—why he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, as was said. But how friendly is it that such men should upon such

terms, and in such a way and method, be brought into that state of righteous persons, when, if they were not so clothed, they stood exposed and naked unto vindictive justice, armed with power even to the highest. But now the sword of vengeance cannot touch them; otherwise, thou wert every moment liable. Oh, what friendliness is there in all this! Again,—

3. This friendship appears in this matter herein, that when God imputes righteousness to the believer, he imparts his Spirit: and this is wonderful friendliness, if the distress of the case be considered. Plain it is, that the miserable sinner did need somewhat else besides clothing, and without it he must have been miserable for ever. And most certain it is, that the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ was never designed to be the clothing of a carcase. The soul that was "dead in trespasses and sins" is made alive when made righteous. There is no need of disputing about priority here: the righteousness and Spirit of Christ are given together; they are simultaneous gifts: he doth not give life by the Spirit to such souls because he hath made them righteous; nor doth he make them righteous because he hath given them life, or given his Spirit: but these are co-ordinate streams from the same fountain of divine grace. "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.—And a horrid catalogue of wickedness was recited in the foregoing 9 and 10 verses, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Righteousness and Spirit are given together; and should we suppose these gifts to be separate, the former would avail little without the latter; for heaven would never be heaven to a dead soul: if it were possible for such a soul, upon the account of Christ's righteousness, to be admitted into heaven, what would a dead soul do there? Therefore, they are gifts of divine grace conferred together. It would be an horrid reproach and contempt that the righteousness of the Son of God should be made a covering for continuing the deformity and loathsomeness of a carcase that should be only hid, and not cured. This is a most unsupposeable thing, and, than which, nothing would be more ignominious, not only to the wisdom of God, but to hi

grace too; for sure it is more abundant grace to cure these two evils together, than one alone; to heal him inwardly and clothe him outwardly at the same time. And again,

4. This friendly inclination on God's part doth further appear in giving repentance to the sinner, which is comprehended in the gift of the Spirit, as every other grace is; only here I must, before I speak more distinctly to this of repentance, enlarge somewhat to shew you under what distinct considerations we are to look on this gift of the Spirit that comprehends all the rest.—The Spirit is given in order to its first working, and in order to its after employment and work that it hath to do in the souls of men. It is not otherwise capable of being given at all, than only relatively and effectively in respect of the relation and effect. But it is not hard to understand in what sense (when a person is the thing spoken of) one can be said to be given to another: it is not the one's being made the other's being: there is nobody so absurd as to understand the matter so: but only such an one becomes related who was unrelated before, and upon that relation doth such works to which relation obligeth, and that he was not obliged to do before. This is the meaning of giving one person to another, in common language amongst men; and so must be the meaning of the Spirit's being given to any of us, that is, that it becomes now related by covenant to us, having been unrelated before; for, when by covenant we take God to be our God, what do we take? not the essence of God abstractly, but we take God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who all become related to us for several purposes—God to be the prime author of being to us, Christ to be our redeemer, the Spirit to be our enlightener and sanctifier; and all as comprehended in the covenant by which God is said to be our God and we to be his people; as is sufficiently and expressly enough signified by the baptismal form; which baptism brings a signal, a token, a seal, of this covenant. We are ergo baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be continually our God. And now hereupon the Spirit becomes ours by covenant, or, we having a covenant interest in him, he comes to do such work, or to work such effects in those to whom he is now become so related, as he works no where else. And so he is with them, and in them, to that very purpose. It is true, the Spirit is all the world over in every man, in every creature, in every thing: "Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit?" Psalm cxxxix. 5. But he is in such as these, for such

and such special gracious purposes as he doth not effect and bring about in any others, but those to whom he is in covenant so related. And this being so far clear, then we must distinguish between his first operations upon souls, and the consequent operations for which those former do prepare and make way. Whatsoever was necessary to be done previously, all that enlightening, all that conviction, which must immediately accompany and, in some respects, in order of nature, but not of time, be before saving faith, if these do come within the compass of saving *grace* (for there are operations that be only within the compass of common grace, which may be before, and long before, in time.) But whatsoever lies within the compass of saving grace, they are all at once. There must be very great exertions of the power and influence of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to believe; and in doing so he does, as it were, work as a visitant, but afterwards he works and operates as an inhabitant; having by his former operations prepared his own habitation, built his temple, now he comes to inhabit this temple, to dwell in it, and to exert himself in all suitable communications and operations from time to time there; as in that 1 Cor. iii. 16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" There never would have been any act of saving grace at all without his Spirit; but there be such acts as are antecedaneous to its indwelling presence, and which he doth as a visitant: whereas there are continual exertions of the grace and power of the Spirit to be done by it afterwards. And how marvellous friendship is this, that God should give his own Spirit to inhabit (with kind designs, and in order to such gracious purposes and ends) such wretched creatures as we. Of all ways you can think of whatsoever to express friendship to another, if it were within the compass of your power it would be in giving them the same mind, the same spirit, the same sentiments of things that you yourself have, wherein you suppose them to be right; you would have them to have every thing of your mind and your spirit (except what you could of yourselves apprehend to be imperfection, infirmity, and defect:) and there was no possible way, if that were in our power, to express kindness and friendship so significantly as this way. If a wise man, a good man could convey to a son, not only his lands, his tithes, his honours, his dignities, but could convey his wisdom, his goodness, his integrity, certainly here were the greatest kindness shewed in this, that

it were possible for a creature to express. If I would do the part of a friend to the uttermost (and this lay within the compass of my power), wherein I thought my friend and my spirit to be right, I would impart to such an one my mind and spirit, that he may be of the same mind. Herein would be the truest friendship; for where there is the truest friendship, and there is the most agreement in minds, they do insensibly mould and form one another, and impress one another. But hereunto there must be a divine power, according to which all things are given pertaining to life and godliness, and the participation (comprehensive of all the rest) of the divine nature, as it is expressed, 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." There is a divine Spirit, and thereby we are made partakers of the divine nature,—of all gracious principles and dispositions of one kind and another. How admirable friendship is there in this, that the holy God should give into the breast and bosom of a man, that pure and holy Spirit, to be an inhabitant and indweller there, to chase away the darkness that enwrapt that wretched soul, to inspire it with a new and holy life, to implant the principles most connatural to such a life, and which are to have their constant exercise through the whole of a man's course. Oh! the friendliness that doth appear in this! But when all this is done, and the soul is made capable of acting, here cannot but be, as I said, in the fourth place—

SERMON XXX.*

JAMES II. 23. *And the scripture was fulfilled,* &c.

4. The exercise of repentance towards God; and the bringing of the soul to this hath the most of friendliness that can be expressed. It is he that brings the soul to the necessary exercise of repentance and godly sorrow, whereby men are brought off from sin, and brought home

* Preached October 3, 1693.

to God. I would now have you to understand, that I do not, by mentioning these things in this order, wherein I do, say that there is such an order punctually observed by God in the effecting and bringing about these things. But where there are many particulars to be mentioned to you, it is impossible they can all be mentioned in one breath; we can but mention one after another. But God's order of doing things may not be always the same. Some acts may be produced first in such an order, and (for aught we know) afterwards in another. And most certain we are, that for the substance of all that is requisite to the salvation and blessedness of the soul, it may, and for aught we know, always is done in one and the same moment, when God regenerates it, visiting it with his Son, and so pardons and justifies it, and entitleth it to eternal life. And it is very possible, that that very moment wherein he first applies himself to the soul to unite it to Christ, may be at the moment of its separation from this body. And so all that is necessary to salvation must be done in that moment, or the soul must be lost; and, for aught we know, it may be always so. But, I say, notwithstanding that when there are many things that are distinct in themselves, that is, that are capable of distinct conceptions in our minds, none of these things are to be overlooked; we must distinctly mention things that do occur, though we cannot mention them all in one moment or breath.

But most certain it is, that there is in this very case repentance necessary; and there is the exercise of repentance necessary. So faith is necessary, not only the principle of faith, but the act and exercise too; for when we are said to be justified by faith, what is the meaning of that? By a disposition to believe: the mere disposition to believe is not believing. We are said to be justified by faith, Rom. v. 1; so Gal. ii. 16, it is said we have believed, that we might be justified. We have believed, not have been disposed only to believe, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. Why so, after the same manner, when it is said, "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out;" the meaning cannot be, that there be some disposition in you to repent. Acts iii. 19. "Repent, for the remission of sins;" Acts ii. 38. The meaning cannot be, that there be in you some essay, some tendency, some inclinations to repentance; but Repent, except you repent (not except you be some way inclined to it), ye shall all likewise perish. Herein, I say, inasmuch as such a repentance is

so conjunct a thing with a safe state for a sinner, there appears most admirable friendliness in this matter. That an heart that was most adverse and disaffected to God before, should be turned to him; that an heart that was before a stone, a rock, should be so relenting; how admirable a thing is this, if you consider at once both the necessity and the excellency, and the rarity of such a repentance. Take these things together, and it is most admirable friendship that appears in giving repentance. It is spoken with admiration, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted re-repentance unto life." Acts xi. 18. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31.

1. Consider the necessity of it, and you acknowledge the friendliness of it. Any one that understood the state of his own case, if he had but so much sense about him as to consider what he should do, and how incapable he is of doing it, would say, Lord, what shall I do with this wretched heart of mine? I can as soon dissolve a rock as melt it down. I cannot make it relent or bleed. The most proper, the most weighty, most important thoughts I can take up, do all hover on the surface, and never enter, have no molifying influence, are productive of nothing: well, now for God to say, this is a thing that shall be done—I will take away the heart of stone; this soul of thine it must dissolve or perish; thou must repent or die. Thy faint strugglings prove thy impotency; I will relieve in this distressed case. Oh what friendship is here! And,

2. If we consider the excellency of the thing wrought in this case, it is a most friendly work. It restores the lost creature to itself, and brings it to God. A most glorious work! Thy wretched soul is not itself till it repent. Repentance is a becoming wise. It is a soul's return to a sound and sober sense of things, of which it was destitute before. The character that Ecclesiastes gives of the hearts of men generally, which we heard opened heretofore, is—madness is in their hearts. Repentance is the cure of this madness. It is by it they return to a sound mind; and it is by it they return to God. "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" you find how they are conjoined, Acts xx. 21. A wandering creature, that hath spent its time hitherto in perpetual deviations from the living God, now comes back to him. Admirable friendliness, to produce and bring about this return! Long it

was, and not such a thought taken up, Where is God my maker? There was no miss of God. How is the soul, after the divine touch and impress put upon it, impatient of longer distance? I can live without God no longer; where is God my maker? This resolution possesses it: "I will arise and go to my Father, and say, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Perhaps there were some cold relentings before, but now that matter is resolved; and it is the power of divine grace, giving repentance, that resolves and determines it. Now a disceptation is out of doors, laid aside. And whereas the matter was long at this pass, Shall I? Shall I? Shall I break off from this way of sin? Shall I abandon that lust which did domineer, and unto which I did enslave myself? Now the soul will be no longer at this pass; Shall I? Shall I? But when God gives it repentance, he brings the matter to this: the soul says, "I will arise and go to my Father," and throw myself at his feet and cry for mercy, as that which I can no longer live and be without. I can remain in this irresolution no longer. This is giving repentance, and oh, how friendly! When by it the soul returns to itself, and to its God at once. And again,

3. If you consider the rarity of such a work, it is wonderful friendliness. How many are there, who sit a life's time under that gospel, which is Christ's call continually to repentance? "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Many live a life's time under that gospel by which he calls, but his call is regarded no more than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees. "I called, but they gave me no answer: I called, but ye refused: I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded." Prov. i. 24. And what proves the issue of this with, God knows, too many? Ye shall call, but I will not regard; ye shall make many prayers, and I will not hear; "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." Consider this as the common case, and what wonderful friendliness is it when he gives repentance! When he enables a poor creature to fall before him in the dust, with self-loathing, clothing itself with shame and confusion before him; when he hath brought it to a supplicating posture; when he hath made it feel wounds and remorse within itself, which the most never feel;—let but these things be considered together, the necessity, the excellency, and the rarity of serious repentance, and it is wonderful friendliness when God worketh a soul to it.

5. Great friendliness appears in his begetting in the soul an universal frame of holiness and rectitude, that is spread through all the powers and faculties thereof. Though this, for aught we know, may be done in the same instant of time wherein he is said to regenerate a soul; yet it is capable of a distinct conception, and so ought not to be altogether confounded with that: for whenever it pleaseth God to touch a soul with a saving divine touch, that touch must be supposed to be vital. He toucheth it, and makes it live. He, by that touch, draws it into union with his Son, to him, so as that it comes to possess him, to have him (in the Scripture phrase); and in having him it hath life. 1John v. 12. Yet, for all this, the having a distinct, explicit frame of holy rectitude laid out through the soul, is a diverse thing; it is to be distinctly considered, supposing that that be by so quick and speedy an operation effected, as to be in the same moment of time. And so, though these be not separable things, they are distinct things. As, when the rational soul is first united with the unformed matter of a human body, there may be said to be a man virtually, though the several parts of the human body are distinctly formed by degrees. It is very true indeed, that where a spiritual being is the subject of an operation, there it may be quick, and, for aught we know, momentary; it may be done, for all we know, in a moment. Spirit being said to be the production, the thing produced in the case, as John iii. 6, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Why, supposing that, yet that first vital touch, by which it may be said to be regenerated, may be distinguished, though not separated from this intire work of regeneration, by which the frame of holiness is superinduced—that work of sanctification. And so the most do distinguish regeneration from sanctification; as the former is the latter virtually, and the latter is the former actually and completely. And this frame consists of that concurrence of gracious principles that do belong to the new nature, now become explicit in the soul. They were all actually in the new nature when first given, but yet make a formed new man, as the divine Spirit lays out the several lineaments thereof by his own operation and influence. And whether that be instantaneous, or whether it be in a continued succession of time, is a matter altogether so unknown, and so unknowable to us, that it would be lost time and labour to go about to dispute it. Besides, that the determination would be as little useful, as it is possible. But certain it is, that besides the communication of the

new nature and the new life, which virtually contain all holy gracious principles in it, there are holy gracious principles given themselves, which actually and formally obtain and have place in the soul, and are the fruits of the Spirit, which we find mentioned in distinct terms, Gal. v. 22, 23, and in divers other places.

6. With this falls in the mortifying and destroying the body of sin; and it is indifferent whether this be mentioned before the other, or after. It is altogether indifferent. For this work of the divine Spirit, it may be very well wrought, by the opposite thereunto taking place in the soul, and making its own way, and expelling the former form, as this latter is itself introduced. As fire seizing upon any combustible matter, it doth at the same time expel the form of the wood or seal, and introduce its own form of fire. But that is a thing that must necessarily fall in, be the order what it will, and it makes little what the order be. But when there is a new man to be put on, there is the old man to be put off, and there is the body of sin and of flesh to be destroyed, so as that the soul is no longer to serve sin. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is to free it from the law of sin and death. Rom. viii. 2. It is altogether an unconceivable thing, that when the soul is in union with Christ, and intitled to a righteousness by him of His working out, that it should at the same time continue in a stated rebellion against God, and under the governing power of reigning sin; of sin still in the throne, and still giving law, or still being a law in the soul,—the law of sin and death. These things can no more consist. The reign and power of sin is broken in the same instant that any one's state is changed. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" under the law, as it is a condemning law. Why, then, at the same time that the sinner ceases to be condemned, sin ceaseth to reign. If it hath no condemning power, it hath no dominion. To be under the condemning power of sin, and to be under grace, these are inconsistent. And to be under grace, and to be under the power of sin regnant, are equally inconsistent. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." It will not consist with your state, with that state which you are to conclude is yours, and is proper to you now, that is, a state of holy life into which you are regenerated. "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ."

Rom. vi. 11. The Apostle is not teaching these to make a false judgement. He would not have them reckon themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ, if they were not alive, or if they were still dead. But if they be so alive, if the life of grace doth come to have any place in them, the reigning of sin is at an end, as the next words shew. Sin is no longer to reign in their mortal bodies. And in the 14th verse, "it can have no dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." And you are resigned (as the intervening 13th verse says), "yielding yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead."

Now how admirable friendship is there in this too, considering the base servitude that all were naturally in unto sin before. With how kind an eye doth the blessed God behold from his throne above, the enthralled, miserable state of wretched souls serving divers lusts and pleasures; drudging to the devil for the wages of death, and no other. Not dictated to by those lusts of theirs, which, being fulfilled, destroy them. "The wages of sin is death." It is only then when men come to have their fruit unto holiness that they have for their end everlasting life. Rom. vi. 22. That there should be so compassionate an eye cast upon the miserable state of forlorn souls upon this account, seeing them so injuriously imposed upon, held in so vile a vassalage, so ignoble a servitude, which hath so destructive a tendency, that they are led as so many slaves in bonds and cords to their destruction and final ruin, to which their course and state do naturally tend;—that God should look down with so compassionate an eye upon the distress of these wretched creatures, and determine with himself; lay the design in his wise and good counsel—I will work the freedom of these wretched souls; I have appointed a Redeemer for them, that is proper for their state of slavery;—the notion of redemption most appositely answers the notion of the enthralled state of sinners before. And ergo, it is observable, Tit. ii. 14, that our Lord is said to give himself for us "to redeem us from all iniquity." Not only to redeem us from wrath and from hell, and final ruin, but "from all iniquity."

And that is one consequent of our being in Christ, or our union with him. If ever we are said to be in him, then he is made to us redemption. Sanctification you have heard of (and you have heard of the other before;) that stands in investing and possessing the soul with an entire new

frame of holiness. And Redemption, which stands in the divestiture of the power of sin, that had introduced into it an universal irrectitude, and which is wrought out or wrought off, eadem opera, by the same work by which the new man or the divine image is superinduced. There is great friendliness in this: These wretched souls (saith God) they shall be slaves no longer, I will assert them into a state of liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. That Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of the Redeemer and Mediator, when it makes its seizure, and takes possession of them for him, it becomes the law of the Spirit of life in them, making them free from the law of sin and death. And that is a further expression of the friendliness of the blessed God to a soul, in and about the matters that here lie under our consideration.

These are his ways with the sons of men, when he is about saving them from going down to the pit—when he hath found out a righteousness and redemption for them; or when he is shewing man his righteousness that he may deliver him from that state of death and destruction into which he was continually ready to precipitate himself.

There are many more instances of this friendliness on God's part yet behind. But as to what has been thus said, let us make some reflections on ourselves. What have we found of this friendliness between the blessed God and our souls, in any such instances as these? Hath there been any such transaction set on foot between him and us? Do we find any applications have been made to our spirits, such as we have attended to? Indeed God speaks to men inwardly, and often, but they perceive it not. He speaks, but they know not his voice that speaks to them. It is often a whispering voice, which they can easily neglect, and against which they shut and stop their ears. We are not to conclude, ergo, that he hath never made any application to us, if we have had no distinct reflections thereon. But we may conclude, if there have been any application made to us to any valuable purpose, then we have been capable of reflecting and taking notice that it hath been made; our attention hath been engaged, and we must have been brought to consider that God is dealing with my soul about the very life of it; and salvation or destruction will be the issue of the treaty, according as I now comply and cooperate (in a subordinate way) with his motions in me and upon me; or do resist them, and comply not. But how awakening should it be to us to consider that these are

matters of life and death; that such a treaty with the souls of men hath this design to invest them with a righteousness in which they may be capable of appearing safely before the tribunal of the supreme and final Judge. And we are each of us to consider with ourselves, have I yet such a righteousness, yea or no? Such a righteousness I cannot have of myself, I must be beholden for it, it must be an imparted thing. Have I any of those characters in me by which I may conclude, or whence I may gather that such a righteousness will be reckoned to me, will be accounted to me, and so answer the exigency of my case as certainly as if I had wrought it out myself?

Why, perhaps, though we have often heard our case thus stated, yet the thoughts of this state of our case may be rarities with many. And are there any among us that never think of any such thing, but just then when we are told of it? Do we believe ourselves to have souls made for eternity and an everlasting estate? And do we apprehend it enough for us to think of such matters as these once a week? We cannot help having some thoughts of this kind when the sound of words that import them beats upon our ears. That we cannot help. But is it enough (I say) for things that do concern us with reference to eternity, to be thought of but once a week, when we cannot help it? When things are borne in upon us, and inserted, and we have no way to keep them off, unless we would stop our ears? Is this like persons designing for eternity, and for an everlasting well-being? If I would throw away all thoughts of these matters till the next season returning of hearing of these again, how do I know when my soul will be required? Sure, methinks, I should consider with myself every time I lie down, have I a righteousness about me in which I may safely lie down? To lie down this night under guilt, when I do not know but this night my soul may be required, this is desperate. Who can answer to himself his having such a resolution as this! I will neglect it, I will throw away all thoughts of it. I will run the hazard, I will try what will come of it! But if, instead of engaging our spirits in the serious thoughts of what doth so deeply concern us, there should be not only a not considering but a continual running in the course that tends to involve us in new guilt, so that the person that doth not know but the next night, or the next hour, he shall be required to surrender and give up a loathsome, guilty soul, how amazing is it that a reasonable intelligent spirit should be sunk into this pitch and

degree of stupidity, so little to consider I have a soul about me that is capable of eternity, and of eternal felicity in that state which lies before me: how amazing is it (I say) that an intelligent spirit should be so low sunk as not to be capable of considering the difference between the pleasures of a moment and an eternity of misery and woe, if such moment be mispent in this world. And an eternity of blessedness if it be employed, as it may be, to purposes which it is possible and capable it may.

I would leave a resolution, if it might be, with each one to consider their case. To have a righteousness that will bear me out before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge is my present and most indispensable concernment. And ergo, shall all of us go away now with the resolution, never to be at rest till we can say this righteousness is ours by friendly vouchsafement? We could never work out such an one to ourselves. But by friendly vouchsafement we find such characters to be upon us that speak his righteousness is ours. Then shall we live the rest of our time, rejoicing in the hope of that glory which is also the hope of righteousness by Jesus Christ, through faith, as the Apostle calls it, Gal. v. 5.—But now I go on to add in the next place—

SERMON XXXI.*

JAMES II. 23. *And the scripture was fulfilled,* &c.

7. THAT God doth effectually make such souls to understand, that in his return to them he will be reconciled without expecting satisfaction from them for all the injuries that they have done him. Turn they must, there is an absolute necessity of it. But he makes them understand that this their turning is not for any recompence to him. It is a friendly signification when he doth (as it were) say to them, You are lost if you do not turn, if there be not serious, unfeigned, evangelical repentance: But know that this repentance of yours is no recompence to me, it is not the thing that shall make me your friend. That cannot be, for he gives this repentance. He hath granted (it is said) to the Gentiles repentance unto life. Acts xi. 18. But it is necessary to make you capable of relishing the pleasures of my friendship, which you never can do if you do not turn to me. If your hearts still remain strange and

* October 15, 1693.

disaffected, there cannot be a friendship between you and me. Not that your repentance signifies any thing to induce me to be your friend; but only to make you capable of relishing my friendship, and of entertaining a friendly commerce with me. As men can have no friendly commerce with one another, unless there be a mutual inclination of mind towards each other; if there be but a disinclination on one side, there can be no friendly converse.

And as much as the gospel speaking thus, and it is the constant tenor of it, that God in being reconciled to sinners expects from them no satisfaction for their own sin, it must needs be that whenever he deals with a soul, in order to the settling a friendship between him and it, he must impress this (which is the very sum and sense of the gospel) upon their spirits. They must be gospelized by it; have their hearts framed according to this import of the gospel, which is, that he never expects from a sinner satisfaction for his sin. Nay, so far from that, that it may be understood, and must be understood, if the gospel be understood aright, for the highest affront imaginable to the Redeemer for any man to offer at making satisfaction for his own sin; yea, and the highest affront imaginable to the offended Majesty of Heaven, to suppose it possible that such a wretch and worm as I can make a satisfaction to the eternal God, for having wronged him by the least wrong that I ever did him. It is to make the Majesty of Heaven cheap to suppose that possible: and therefore by the tenor of the gospel that must be the remotest thought in all the world.

It is to usurp upon and invade the Redeemer's office. 1 Pet. ii. 24, quoted from Isaiah liii. 8. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. ix. 26. And having by himself purged our sins, expiated our guilt (for that is a grand part and a fundamental one of their wanting of that purgation) he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having done this by himself. So that if a sinner should offer at such a thing to make satisfaction, what will he say? Dost thou touch him with thy work? This is a thing I do by myself. This is part of my sacred office; dost thou touch my work? Hands off, it belongs to me.

And it is to suppose the Majesty of Heaven cheap and mean, and to suppose the Redeemer impotent, to think that the sinner should expiate his own sin and make God amends, when he hath committed this thing entirely to his

own Son. Thus it is that he doth gospelize the spirits of sinners, when he is designing to make them his indeed, to bring them into a state of friendship with him. That though there be most tender relentings, and deepest debasement and humiliation, and they could lay themselves even as low as hell at the foot of the mercy seat, yet for all this, it is the remotest thing in all the world for them to imagine they can satisfy the Divine Majesty in the least, give the least satisfaction for the least offence or wrong that they have done. Therefore whereas this is the voice of the gospel, "Turn and ye shall live," and, I expect no compensation from you for any of the injuries you have done me, you that have lived in continual neglect of me all your days, wandering from and rebelling against the God of your lives,—if you turn I will be reconciled to you freely; I will most freely forgive you; the pardon and the peace that I am ready to afford you shall cost you nothing; and whatsoever is requisite to your present safe, and future happy state, shall be without the least expense to you. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah lv. 1. Never trouble yourselves for money, for it shall cost you nothing. Those mercies, that flow as waters from a most exuberant and abundant fountain; those gracious, those spiritful communications meant by milk and wine, these shall all stand you in nothing; you shall have all freely if you will come. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Why this is a strange way to induce men to be reconciled to God, and to become friends with him. You will say, I have offended him highly, lived long in continual neglect of him and rebellion against him; how shall I see his face? How shall I hold up my head before him? What shall I render to him by way of recompence? Shall it be thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Alas! I cannot command them, and they would signify nothing if I could. If this whole world were mine, and I could make it one flaming sacrifice to his offended wrath and justice, it would avail nothing. Oh! to have any such objection seasonably and aptly obviated! Why, all that you need, it shall be given without price. Without price! what, such precious things as I need, and must have, or I must perish? Yes, be they never so precious. "The Son

of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Do not think it will reach but to a few. Be they never so many, it is a ransom of sufficient value. "He gave himself a ransom for all, (see 1 Tim. ii. 6.) to be testified in due time." That is, he offered so full a ransom, that if there were never so many to be saved, there needs no addition to the value of the ransom. And none can fall short of being saved, for that reason, because the ransom was too little, because it would not answer the exigencies of the case. That can never be objected.—"To be testified in due time." I rest on that passage, too faintly rendered, and so as to hide from us the true and full significancy of it; "he gave himself a ransom, a testimony;" there is no more than so; which being read as a parenthesis, those words (in due time) are connected with the former, he gave himself a ransom in due time, in the proper appointed time. A testimony; yea, a wonderful testimony. Christ upon the cross! What a testimony is this of the reconcileableness of God to sinners! What pretence hath the unbeliever, or any heart, against the speakingness and significancy of this testimony? When you see Christ dying, and Christ a ransom to redeem sinners by a reconciling sacrifice, is not that a sufficient testimony of the Divine good will? You see this in far lower instances: he did not leave himself without witness, when there was no more to be seen of his kindness, propension, and good will to men, but giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. But, oh! what a witness is this, when he gives his Son to die as a ransom upon the cross! when he is set forth (as the expression is) "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. A mighty testimony to the grace of God, and a mighty testimony against the unbelief of men. He gave himself a ransom; and here was the testimony that God is ready to receive returning sinners, and to be reconciled to them without any price paid by them. Having such a ransom, such a price paid down already for them; so that now, sinners, whoever you are, that live under the gospel, you have not this pretence left against making haste to be reconciled unto God—"I have highly offended him, I have wronged him; I can make him no recompence, no satisfaction." This is to add wickedness to your sin, to think of making him a satisfaction. He never leaves that upon you; you have not that to say against returning presently, and falling with a broken heart at the footstool of the throne

of grace. You are not to insist upon this; it would be wickedness to stand upon it, to think of making him satisfaction. No, you have nothing to do, but only to fly to him for mercy, implore his mercy, be at his foot; there will be peace between him and you. He is willing to be reconciled, and it shall cost you nothing. And then lastly as to this former head, in the 8th place,

8. He thus at length brings about actual covenanting between himself and the sinner. That covenant into which they enter is a covenant of reconciliation, a covenant of peace, a league of amity, in which they take him for their reconciled God, through Christ the great Mediator of this covenant, and give up themselves as reconciled ones to be of his people. He brings them to this, desists not, gives not over the treaty with such as do believe to righteousness and salvation, till matters be brought to this issue and result. A covenant is struck between him and them. The sinner seeing this state of the case, I must perish if I do not turn; if I do turn, reconciliation and pardon and acceptance with God, will cost me nothing, I shall have all freely; then I have no more to say, but to resign and say, Lord, I take thee for my reconciled God; I give up myself to thee as a reconciled one, to be of thy people. Here is the issue and result of things between God and sinners. Then, when he is dealing with them, in order to the producing of that faith in them, upon which they are justified and saved. . . . . Now the state of friendship is settled, and all things are concluded between him and them by a solemn covenant. "Now (saith he,) I have the sinner reduced and under bonds, safe and happy bonds, I am content to be under bonds myself to him; at the same time I require him to be bound, I bind myself. I will be a God to thee, though thou hast been an offending creature." And so the poor soul it hath no more to do but to accept God for his God, and to resign himself to him as a reconciled one, to be of his people. Now, I say, the state of friendship is settled by all this between God and the sinner; and being so, there are sundry other great expressions of friendship consequent upon the settlement of this state. As,

1. That God takes possession of such an one as his own. He takes an entire possession of him. Now thou art mine; not in right and title only as thou wast before, and as all the creation is, but mine by consent, mine by covenant; mine by claim, and thy own solemn act indeed. He accordingly takes possession of the soul as his own; comes in

upon it with the fulness of that Spirit that designs here to fix his abode, and vouchsafe its constant inhabiting presence.

I told you, before, the distinction between the Spirit's visiting and the Spirit's dwelling; and, if you will, of its building and its inhabiting. In all the former work it did visit, and it was a building preparing for itself. Whatsoever was done or wrought in the soul in all the forementioned kinds, it was all the work of that Spirit approaching the soul, and forming it for the purposes for which it was designed. And being so prepared and formed, now it comes and inhabits the soul so prepared and brought into such a state by the Spirit: for it is now its temple. It is become a temple. He was to build first; he finds all in ruins and rubbish; the ruins of an old temple. But now there is a new fabrick erected. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. In whom we are builded together, that is, in Christ; in whom the foundations are laid of this temple, and who is himself the original temple, replenished with the fulness of God. "Destroy this temple (meaning his body,) and in three days I will raise it up again." Here, I say, was the original temple, and the model and platform of that temple, which every regenerate person becomes upon union with him. All are brought as so many lively stones to that "living corner stone, and so built up a spiritual house." 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. And so that, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephes. ii. 22. Here, ergo, now the Holy Ghost is to dwell—a mighty friendship! I will have my very spirit be in you. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. I will put it into you, so that there it shall have a fixed abode. Hereby we know that he dwelleth in us and we in him, by the Spirit that he hath given us. That is the mutual indwelling which speaks the nearness of the union, and is indifferently expressed by God's dwelling in us and our dwelling in him. We could know nothing of this, but by the Spirit in its vital and discernible operations. By the Spirit that he hath given us, (which is an active, powerful principle in us,) we know that he dwells in us and we dwell in him; it speaks itself by efforts that may be felt, that are most perceptible. And,

2. He hereupon holds a continual communion with such souls: that is it for which he will dwell with them by his

Spirit, in order to constant converse; as they that cohabit can converse together more freely and more constantly than others. Indeed, cohabitation is not fully expressive of this case, of this mutual inhabitation, which comes a great deal nearer; so that the conversation that can be between them who inhabit in the same walls, and under the same roof, is too defectively expressive of vital communion, that living intercourse which is between God and such souls: for as he doth inhabit by his Spirit, he converseth by his Spirit. This fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, but by the Spirit, called the communion of the Holy Ghost. Compare 1 John i. 3, with 2 Cor. xiii. 14. That fellowship which believing souls are said to have with the Father and with the Son, is called the communion of the Holy Ghost: the immediate agent between the blessed God, Father, and Son, and the soul, that must move and work towards him. And so this communion is not like that between men and men, be they never so near and never so dear to each other, never such friends; they cannot converse but by words or by external signs and tokens. But here is an immediate converse of spirit, a vital converse; the Holy Spirit moving the soul inwardly, and making it move under its motions back again towards God in Christ: for God is not to be conversed with otherwise than in his Christ. And so the matter differs as to this sort of operation by the renewed soul, from the operations that are exerted and put forth in it, by way of preparation and introduction unto this state of friendship; for in those the soul is but passive, barely passive, it is wrought upon; but now it comes to be active; it is so acted upon as to procure a continual re-acting, and it is so in every gracious act. Such is the vouchsafement of grace on God's part, and such the exigency of the case on the soul's part, that there shall not be one act but, saith God, I will have a hand in it. He mingles with the renewed spirit in every gracious act that this communion speaks. As it is in playing on a musical instrument, there is no string that sounds untouched, and every string as it is touched; here is action and re-action throughout; so it is in this communion between God and the soul through Christ and by the Spirit.

Here is the greatest friendliness imaginable on his part to bring it about and procure that a soul which was alienated from him, and a stranger and disaffected to him, which chose to live at the utmost distance from him, now acts all in God. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his

deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God." John iii. 21. There are such works, such motions, such modencies, such suspirings in the soul, as speak him to be the author; as carry their own proof, their own evidence in them, that they are wrought in God. Men would be no such thing if God were not in the matter. But O! what friendliness is this, that he will procure that there should be such a converse, such an intercourse; his own blessed Spirit mingling with the spirit of a poor soul, which he hath now put his own impression upon, and gives his vital formative touch unto. 3. His friendship appears upon all this, that now he taketh all due care of their growth, of their improvement in all spiritual excellencies. He takes continual care, I say, of their growth, all due care, all that it befits and becomes him to take. And you must know, that his friendliness in this thing is not to be estimated merely by the success, by their actual discernible growth and improvement; because his care and his agency must be suitable to the subject. This the divine decorum doth require, that his agency should be suitable to the subject, and the subject must be considered as an intelligent subject. And, ergo, how are such to grow? They are not to grow as the lilies of the field, not to grow as the grass and trees grow, without any thing of care and concern. Indeed, we are directed by our Saviour, in reference to our external concerns, to be void of all perplexing care, considering how the lilies of the field grow without it. But there is no such thing directed with reference to our souls and spiritual concernment. But we are there put upon seeking and striving to the very utmost. Seek first the kingdom of God, principally, with all the intentions of your souls. That kingdom of God, which in its first and inchoate state must be within us, that we are to intend and take care of, and to labour every day to have our spirits near, and more cultivated and wrought into a compliance with, and subserviency to, the laws and rules of that kingdom: this must be our business. Our souls ought to be a garden, a paradise, which we are to till and cultivate, and to take a continual care of. Therefore, I say, that the friendliness that is to be seen in the care of God for our growth, is not to be estimated merely by our discernible growth, but several other ways. As,

1. By the kindness of his design: he designs our spiritual increase. And,

2. By the aptness of the means that he useth thereunto, both internally and externally.

(1.) Internally. He hath implanted vital principles ca-

pable of growing, capable of improving, a new life, a new nature, whose tendency is to perfection.

Natura intendit perfectissimum. It is an universal law, concerning all nature, that it ever intends that which is most perfect. And certainly the new nature is not most unnatural, it is not the least of all natural; it doth not deviate from and fall below the rules of universal nature. He hath implanted principles which naturally tend to perfection, and that affords continual influences to co-operate with and cherish those principles from that Spirit; from which it is possible he may retire, may be grieved, and so infer miserable infeeblements and languishments upon the deserted soul, deserted in a degree, and deserted for a time. And,

(2.) He affords the most suitable external means. The sincere milk of the word is to be received for that very purpose, that we may grow thereby; and we are directed continually to supplicate and draw down by believing, by the exercise of that principle of faith, influences from above that may cherish all the rest, and to have that faith exercised and breathing in all the external duties and acts of worship, which from time to time are to be performed. And herein there is a great appearance and demonstration of God's friendliness towards regenerate souls. He so far takes care of their growth, doing what becomes and befits the wisdom of a God to do in his dealings with intelligent creatures, reasonable spirits now inspired from himself, and planted with new principles from above; yea, and in this matter his friendliness must be owned to appear,

(3.) In the very rebukings themselves, which he gives, when, through slothful neglect, languishings do ensue. For we must know, that such decays as are consequent upon the Spirit's being grieved, and retiring and withdrawing in a degree, are at the same time faults and chastisements. If my spirit languisheth, be faint and feeble, this is a defect,—the want of that spirit and liveliness that should be in me, and, ergo, blameable. But it is corrective also; "thine own backslidings shall reprove thee." Jer. ii. 19. See now "that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken me," that thou hast withdrawn thyself, that thou hast retired and neglected me: "thy own backslidings shall reprove thee." And then,

(4.) The friendliness that appears in that care, which God takes of our spiritual growth, is seen in the excellency of the plant that is to grow, or whose growth or improvement

he takes this care of. And what is that? A divine and heavenly principle, and all additional degrees, by the accession whereof it is said to improve and grow. They hold to the kind, they are congenerous, and are of the same kind. So that if there be growth, there is always a suitable communication from heaven, from God, which is in its own kind and nature a divine and heavenly thing. That grace which is to grow, is an heaven-born thing; a thing born of God. It is God's own production; yea, it is his very image; for the creation is his production—he hath made all things. But this is a production of his own image, his very likeness. The new man is created after God. He is himself at once the author and exemplar of this work and production. Ephes. iv. 24. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Coloss. iii. 10. God is now introducing his own image into the soul, when he is new creating it. And this is a work not to be done in the dark; it "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Now (as if he should say) I am now going to raise up a new creation in a dark, dead, ruined, desolate, forlorn soul: It is a glorious work I am about, let it be beheld, let it come into the light. I will have the soul itself know what I am doing upon it: it is renewed in knowledge, a light shining upon the soul, by which it may perceive that God is bringing in upon it his own likeness. Mighty friendliness this is. As it is often a way wherein a man expresses his kindness to his friend, by giving him his picture, so doth God express his friendliness, gives his picture, and gives it so inwrought into the soul itself. Wherever thou goest, I will have thee carry my picture, even in thy breast. Great friendliness. And this is an image that can grow; for it is a living image, not a dead show. It is a vital image that is capable of improvement, and growing liker and liker, and still of growing liker and liker, as the image is. "By beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18. What a mighty friendliness is this! But then I should come, in the fourth place, to shew

4. What friendliness he expresses towards the soul, upon its backsliding, after all. How graciously he recalls the backsliding soul, and what his workings towards it are herein and hereupon. But methinks the hearing of all this should set many an heart on work among

us. Oh, who would not have such a friend? Who would want such a friend, if he be to be had. If friendship with Him be a possible thing, Oh, why should I live upon earth without it? They are dark and gloomy days wherein generally men go from morning to night, and know nothing of this friendly converse with Him. Oh, why should not my soul be open to the entertainment of such a friendly overture? Why should not I fall in with it? Why should such a day be lost to me? Why should such a day as this be past over? the day of treaty betwixt the blessed God and wretched souls. Why should I lose such a day, and not be immediately and out of hand taken into this blessed state of friendship with God, and give up myself absolutely and entirely to him? But now to proceed:

SERMON XXXII.*

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

4. It is a further expression of friendliness on God's part, towards these believing ones, that when they wander and backslide from him, he recalls them and recovers them—takes a course for their reducement—will not let them go so as at length to lose them, by not using the most apt and fit means for their recovery and final salvation. How often is his voice heard crying out, "Return, return, ye backsliding children." How full of affection to this purpose are there many verses in Jeremiah iii. Pleading, striving with backsliding wanderers, that they would return. Indeed it is such an aggravation to the sinner, as it might make it astonishing to us, that such as have been treated with such kindness and friendliness as doth appear in all the forementioned instances, should yet be so prone to backslide and deviate. How might it confound us to think that such a spirit should be in us, that no enticements, no endearments, will stay or hold us in with this our great and blessed friend, but that we should still be so apt to make excursions. What with convictions we have continual reason to discern, and with sorrow and

* Preached October 22, 1693.

shame to confess in this kind, is what we find in the word of truth, and in the sacred records often. "My people are bent to backslide from me." Hosea xi. 7. A people that might call themselves his, and whom he calls his, that there should be such a bent in them, not a weak inclination only appearing now and then, and usually overcome, but a stiff and steady bent, as the expression signifies—this is very amazing. And that there is a continual bent and proneness this way, the Apostle's caution to Christians doth too plainly signify. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Heb. iii. 12. They who believe have still reason to say, "Lord help our unbelief." They who have that for the nature and kind of it which was the faith of Abraham, and whereupon God imputes righteousness to him, they are not throughout always of his practice, do not constantly walk by that faith. Though that faith, in the nature and kind of it, was spoken of as so common to him with all believers, that it is designedly represented and held forth to us, as neither confined to the circumcision nor to the uncircumcision. And, ergo, so mighty a stress is laid upon this thing, that he had this upon which God judged him righteous before he was circumcised; that so it might be understood that this faith, and the justifying, saving effects of it, were not confined to the Jew or Gentile, but common to believers of both sorts by the same faith; God justifying the circumcision and uncircumcision too, through the same faith, as you find Rom. iii. 30.

But this faith hath its remission (as to degree, and as to its exercise), its great and sinful intermissions; for all intermissions of acts are not sinful; but there are sinful intermissions too of the exercise of faith very frequently, and then what is the issue and effect? Departing from the living God, backsliding, drawing off from God, as faith is a coming to him. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Believing is coming; disbelieving, not believing, ceasing to believe, that is departing from him—going off. Take heed of "an evil heart of unbelief," which lies in that departure from the living God.

But as that is indeed on their parts a most unfriendly thing, oh, how friendly is it, that, when they depart, he calls after them, "Whither are ye going?" Rather might he have said, and with infinitely higher reason, "Be gone

then. Will you be gone?—then depart for ever." I say with higher reason, than he who once said somewhat like it. It is said of that morose philosopher (who was wont to be called the Cynick), that his servant Manes was leaving him, withdrawing himself from him, and was gone. Some of his friends would have had him send after him, to have reduced him. 'Fetch him back? No, (saith he,) that is a mean, that is a turpid action. It is very mean and dishonourable (saith he) that Manes should think that he could live without Diogenes, and Diogenes should not live without Manes: never send after him.' Oh! with how infinitely higher reason might God have said so. "That is mean, that they should think they could live without me, but I cannot live without them. If they will be gone, let them go." But he doth not do so; and, ergo, you may understand it is pure friendliness towards them, that when they are departed and gone, he ever calls after them; that he should direct his proclamation to be made in such cases. Go and proclaim these words, "Return, return, O ye backsliding children," as it is in Jeremiah iii. That he should insist upon it, urge and inculcate it, as he doth. You have the same thing again, Hosea xiv. 1, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.—I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." ver. 4. How gracious an invitation doth he send after such as are backsliders, revolted and gone, to return and come back again. He orders that they "shall hear a voice behind them, a word (as Isaiah xxx. 21), saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." As if he should have said, Alas! you mistake your way, whither are you going? This is the right way. You are going away from your God;—you seem most dangerously to mistake your way, when you are going to the right hand, or going to the left hand. This is not your way to God, and to rest, and blessedness, and peace, and a finally good state. And by many media, and sometimes immediately, he causeth, and he maketh such a voice to be heard, "a voice behind them," or that shall, some way or other, reach their ears, and reach their hearts. Sometimes he takes care that they shall meet it in the Bible; drops a word into their minds, which they have heretofore read, or providentially puts it under their eye. How many such seasonable voices have there been to poor wanderers, that if they have taken up this Book (and sometimes it may be very carelessly, and without design) they

have met with a passage that hath struck them. I am out of the way, I must go back to my God again. Sometimes they meet with it in a sermon; sometimes in the conversation of a pious friend; sometimes in a providence, in an affliction, a loss, a sickness, a pain. Sometimes stroke comes upon stroke, in such kinds: and if they will wander in by-paths, God hedgeth up the way with thorns, and they are constrained to retreat and go back: they can find no other way but to return. It is the world commonly, that ensnares and entices away men's hearts from God, that he imbitters to them. And sometimes they meet with so great losses in worldly respects, that thereupon they begin to say, Why at this rate I may lose all, sure it concerns me to ascertain to myself somewhat that cannot be lost. And the effect is sometimes such that they must say, If I had not that loss, I had lost myself. If I had not lost such and such a part of my estate, in all likelihood I had lost my soul, that was going.

God hath by such a means reduced me, recovered me, made me bethink myself. I must make sure of my relation to God, of a portion in God, or be ruined for ever. But whatsoever the means be, there is wonderful kindness and friendliness in the thing.

Sometimes this voice comes more immediately. And indeed if it do not so, he doth afford media; if he by these doth not himself work the effect and touch the heart, it is never brought about. He speaks inwardly by his Spirit, striving by that; striking the soul by convictions, rouseth it by terrors; and when it is seasonable allures it, and by pleasantnesses and sweet relishes of better things than they can gain by their wanderings. And then also he sets conscience on work, and makes that to fall out and fight with themselves, and they are engaged in soliloquies and in discoursing and debating the matter with their own souls. What shall I get by this course of wandering, to which I seem to have indulged myself a liberty? what will come of it? He makes their own hearts and reins to instruct them in the night season, and then to commune with themselves on their bed, and be still, in great silence, to discourse and reason the matter with their own souls; and so one way or other reduceth and calls back the poor wanderer. Oh how great is the friendliness of all this. And then,

5. It is great kindness and friendliness, when they do return, and are reduced, that he so freely forgives them; that he pardons so copiously, so plentifully. As there is

plenteous forgiveness with him, he is ready to multiply pardons beyond what they can have the confidence many times to ask; that when they must upon occasion, and when their hearts are touched with a lively sense of their own disingenuous dealings, when they come to present and prostrate themselves before the mercy seat, they must be in such postures as that holy man—"I blush, I am ashamed, I am confounded, and not able to lift up my face before thee." He is in this case more ready to forgive than they can be to ask forgiveness. Not unto "seven times, but unto seventy times seven." They would be soon ashamed to ask at that rate. And when they are convinced thoroughly, and in good earnest, they are very unapt to forgive themselves as God is apt to forgive them. And indeed he is so much the more ready to forgive, by how much the less apt they are to forgive themselves. Self-lothing, self-accusing, self-abhorrence; they are the best part of the claim that they can make to forgiveness; to say, that to them belongs shame and confusion of face, but to him righteousness. As to any thing that is in them, or can have place there, there is nothing that hath more an aspect and look towards forgiveness from God, than their severity towards their own souls. They think with themselves, taking measure (as they are too prone to do) of God's greatness by their own littleness, of his immense goodness by the narrowness of their own spirits; and what they find their own inclinations to be towards others that offend them, implied by that question of Peter to our Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but Until seventy times seven." Matt. xviii. 21, 22. On hearing this, the disciples say altogether, "Lord, increase our faith." Luke xvii. 5.

We do not know how to conceive of so large and so copious a forgiveness, or promise to forgive, as this, Lord, increase our faith, if such a thing as this be looked for from us. We know not how to comprehend it. So much more incomprehensible and inconceivable is that readiness to forgive which resides in the fountain, in him who is the Father of all mercy, and of all compassion, and who hath made himself known by the name of "The Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. Men do

not know how to conceive this of God, and ergo reason thus with themselves, I should not know how to forgive another offending me so oftentimes. Alas! saith God, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isa. lv. 8, 9. They are apt to measure God by their span and inch. As the distance is, and infinitely more, between heaven and earth, "and as far as the east is from the west, so far he removeth our transgressions from us." It is in the same context we are told he multiplies to forgive, or he abundantly pardons. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," or will multiply to pardon, that is the emphasis of the Hebrew expression. But how can this be understood, that God should pardon so numerous, so multiplied transgressions as ours? Why ergo, those words come in, My ways are not as your ways, &c. Indeed if any should think hereupon to turn this grace into lasciviousness, that is to turn themselves quite out of it. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 14. These are inconsistent terms, to be under grace and under the dominion of sin. Most certain it is (as hath been told you before) that God doth impart the righteousness and the sanctifying Spirit of Christ together, never separately. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11. If any should say in their own hearts, Now I may sin freely, grace will abound. Let us sin, because grace abounds, or that it may abound. "God forbid (saith an Apostle;) How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. To reason so is to reason yourselves quite out of all interest in grace at all. To leave yourselves nothing at all. Because that grace is in those streams and communications of it inseparable from itself. That is pardoning grace, and renewing, sanctifying grace, they run together *pari passu*. And God justifies none in their rebellion. I will pardon you: I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. Only acknowledge thine iniquities. Jer. iii. 12, 13. and thence to the 19th verse. Here you have God pleading with himself on the behalf of these backsliding ones, what he shall do with them. How shall

I put thee among the children? How shall I ever look upon thee as a child more? Why, saith he, thou shalt call me "My Father," and not turn away from me. How shall I do this? Why I have but this one way, to do it inwardly, to touch their hearts. How shall I ever treat you as children again? Why I tell you the truth, I must inwardly prompt you to betake yourselves to me with inward, child-like, filial humiliation, contrition and repentance, so as to make you own me for your Father with relenting, tender, broken hearts. Then I shall assign you the pleasant portion among the children, not disinherit you, not put you out of the family. But these works of grace must be carried on towards you conjunctly, or not at all. Therefore, that soul which remains under the power of sin reigning in it, and wherein it hath a throne, that soul hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy, while this is his case; for he hath nothing to do with pardoning mercy out of Christ. And if he be in Christ, then Christ is made unto him "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 2 Cor. i. 30. But again,

6. Friendliness appears towards those that have made a defection, and in great degrees gone off from God, that he doth not (while it is but in such degrees) withdraw his Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," says the penitent Psalmist, Ps. li. 11, "and cast me not out of thy presence." The Spirit is all this while not yet gone; it doth not desert them. It hath formed such into habitations for itself; "made them habitations for God through the Spirit." Ephes. i. 11. Temples they are of the Holy Ghost. He will let it appear that he is not easy to remove; not apt to withdraw and quit his habitation, and to make a sacred habitation or temple desolate. Ergo, prays the Psalmist, "O do not take thy Spirit from me, nor cast me out of thy presence!" The Spirit was not totally withdrawn, even as to his sense; he apprehended it to be with him still. When he saith, "take it not away," he apprehended he then had it; and when he saith "cast me not away from thy presence," he apprehends himself to be in God's presence: I am yet with thee. And yet there was a seemingness, a look, an aspect, in the present state of things between God and him, as if he was about to cast him out, according to "O do not cast me out of thy presence!" that's death, that's deadly to me. Oh! he dreaded to be cast out; but at the same time he apprehends himself not cast out, according to that in Ps. lxxiii. 23. "Nevertheless

I am still with thee : thou holdest me with thy right hand." "I am ever with thee," saith he in one place; and saith in the other, "cast me not out of thy presence." And lay this together, and they carry this signification and sense with them, that the hand which seemed to thrust, held at the same time. The hand (I say) that seemed to throw them away, it held them to him at the same time.

And such semblances there are between friends, when on the one part there is occasion given to resent unkindness; one may thrust at such an one, as if one would have him be gone, yet hold at the same time, as loth to let him go. And again,

7. This friendliness further appears in the same case in the recomposing of the frame of your spirits, when all was miserably shattered and discomposed. In the wanderings of such, they waste their strength; they fall and break their bones. All things are put out of frame with them. Oh! what kindness it is to recompose that shattered frame! It comes to this sometimes, that Christ is to be formed again in the soul, as in that, Gal. iv. 19, "Of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The work of the new creation is (as it were) to be done over again. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. li. 10. Here is more creating work to be done again, new creating work to be done. Not as if there were nothing left, as though there were no residue; but there is much to be done *de novo*. "I create the fruit of the lips peace, peace." Whatsoever is to be produced out of a foregoing state of non-entity, this must be still creation. This heart was become unclean; there must be a cleanness now wrought in it by creation. "Create in me a new heart." The frame of my spirit was all wrong —"renew a right spirit within me," saith the psalmist.

And how much of friendliness is there in this. The backslidden, wandering soul hath, in its departure from God, put all out of joint and frame; every thing is amiss. The heart was enwrapt in darkness, and he enlightens, and with his beams penetrates that darkness. It was dead, and he quickens it. It was grown a vague heart, and he makes it serious. An hard heart, and he mollifies it, softens it again, makes it tender. The conscience was stupefied, but he awakens it to the work and business of its office. Love was grown cold, he makes the fire glow again. Desires faint and languid, they become now strong and vigorous. The soul was grown terrene and worldly, thinking to compen-

sate and make up to itself out of this world what it had lost in God, and in his communion, and in the enjoyment of his Christ, and so was fallen into a friendly treaty with God's enemy. "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God?" He opportunely breaks this league, renders this world again a contemptible thing, brings the poor soul to overcome it. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," gets it under his feet, triumphs over it; so that the soul is enabled to say, What a vile, despicable thing is all this world, to become (as it were) the competitor and rival of the great God, for an opposite and a ruling interest in my heart and soul!

This is wonderful kindness, to recompose the frame of the soul when all is out of course. He finds the poor creature wounded, and he heals the wound; doth the part of the good Samaritan, pours in wine and oil; when the wretched creature was fallen among thieves, got into bad company, and there wounded and broken, maimed, and made miserably decrepid, he heals all. If you turn I will heal your backslidings. "Heal my soul that hath sinned against thee," saith the Psalmist. Psalm xli. 4. I am sensible of wounds, bruises, and broken bones; heal my soul. Experience makes such say as they come, "Let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." Hosea vi. 1. This is still great friendliness. And,

8. When it is most seasonable, he restores them peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; "the joy of his salvation," which the Psalmist supplicates for in that penitential Psalm li. And,

9. He helps them in conflicts all along. Their life is to be a continual conflict. This is friendly to stand by them when they are in conflicts with flesh and blood, and conflicts with principalities and powers. "Satan hath desired to have you," saith our Saviour, speaking directly to Peter, but in the plural number, Luke xxii. 31, "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He would have you; Satan hath a mind to you, he covets you; but I have prayed. God hath put these believing ones out of doubt concerning his kind propensions towards them in reference to this case of their being tempted, by this, that he hath set over them "a merciful and faithful High Priest, who himself having suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." Heb. ii. 17, 18. and ch. iv. 15, 16. And in the last place,

10. This friendliness appears on God's part in introducing them at last into the heavenly society, who are all to be associated with himself and his Christ for ever. He enables them to overcome, and they then must sit down with him upon his throne. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Rev. xx. 6. This is great friendliness indeed, that can never be satisfied, but with eternal converse, to be everlastingly of the same society. Then those that were of Abraham's faith, with those other great worthies that we find mentioned together often, and particularly in Hebrews xi. are all now gathered to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, where all these friends are to be entertained together in one society. This is an agreed thing, and the known and declared pleasure of God and Christ; a matter concerted between him and his Son. "I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am in glory." And he tells us elsewhere, he is always heard; ergo, the matter is agreed between him and his Father. So that this faith, upon which persons are counted or called (as Abraham was) the friends of God, who do believe as he did, doth not only now justify, but finally save. And that indeed ought to compose our minds, and lessen the wonder with us, when we find that God is so frequently gathering and drawing up, one after another, out of this world of ours, divers from among ourselves, gone into the bosom of the earth, and into Abraham's bosom, being believers with Abraham's faith, and now got into possession of the same blessedness that he hath been so long possessed of. Let us all wait; God will gather us up all in time. For those who have lived by this faith, they are all designed to one and the same state. They must be for ever together with the Lord; and, ergo, we ought to comfort our own hearts, and to comfort one another, (as the apostle concludes 1 Thess. iv.) with these words: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

SERMON XXXIII.*

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled; &c.

Now we have spoken of the former part of God's friendliness towards believers; and in reference thereto we have considered this friendship objectively and passively. Abraham was called the friend of God; that is, one towards whom God did express a great deal of friendship. We are now to consider this friendship subjectively on our part, as that whereof we are the subjects, if we be believers; and to consider what appearances there are in the exercise of such a faith of a friendly mind towards God.

What hath formerly been noted to you, must still be remembered, that there can be no true friendship between God and man, but with the reservation of the order of superiority and inferiority between him and us; for such friendship as shall be inconsistent with that, we must still reserve this always in our thoughts, that he is infinitely above us; and we are upon all accounts most inconsiderable, mean, and little, (next to nothing) in comparison of him; that he is a friend to us, as he is all-sufficient, infinitely full, and self communicative; but that our friendship towards him is such as belongs to indignant, craving, necessitous, empty creatures, that can at best only be brought into an aptitude to receive and take in his communications. And indeed that faith is the receptive principle upon which Abraham was said to be accounted righteous.

This must be always remembered; and being so, then I say such friendliness towards God as can consist with our state, and with a state of things between him and us, doth eminently appear in many great indications, in or about the exercise of that faith towards him, upon which he justifies, and is finally to save.

There appears to be much of a friendly mind towards him in this matter upon this account, that the world is so generally obdured and set against God by infidelity; so that such a faith in him is a very singular thing in the world. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm

* Preached October 29, 1693.

of the Lord revealed?" as the complaint is, Isaiah liii. 1, when the design was to give a representation of the Son of God in his descent into this wretched world of ours, and that low and mean state of humiliation which he submitted himself to here, when he became a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. Here is a report to be made of these things unto the world. But who believes our report? Where shall we find those that will believe or regard it? We speak every where to deaf ears, and represent these matters to blind eyes; hearts obdured and shut up in unbelief. But where any eyes and ears are opened, hearts made attentive and flexible, though this be of God's own promising, he looks upon it with a kind eye. Well, now I find then there are some among men that are not so under the power of a vicious prejudice, but they can hear and receive what is reported and revealed to them about those great and glorious things which the gospel contains. "They have not all obeyed the gospel," as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 16, referring to and quoting this passage (Isaiah liii. 1,) "For Esaias saith, who hath believed our report?" We may go whither we will, and scarce can find any one who believes what we say, though we speak the greatest and most glorious things, things of the most pressing necessity and highest importance to the persons themselves to whom we speak. If there be here and there some in a corrupt and degenerate world that will give ear and any regard to what is spoken from heaven in the name of the Lord about the great concernments of souls, these are the persons that have found favour in his eyes; he looks upon them with a kind eye, as he did upon Noah in such a corrupt state of things. "Thee have I found righteous before me." Therefore, for thee I am resolved there shall be an ark prepared, that thou mayest be so far subservient to that design of thine own preservation, as to be employed in preparing that ark. And whence came it that he did so? It is referred to his faith. "By faith he being warned of God, and moved with fear, prepared the ark, to the saving of his house." Whereas ergo, it is said, Gen. vii. 1. "Thee have I found righteous before me in thy generation." I will take care of thee; thou hast borne a friendly mind towards me, and I will do the part of a friend towards thee. I say, wherein this is said, we find wherein this faith stood. Wherein it was, (*i. e.* in reference to the productive principle) that Noah did come to approve himself one that bore a just mind towards God. It is referred all

to this principle, and resolved all into this as the productive principle, to wit, "that Noah would believe God," would take the word of God when no one else would; "all flesh having corrupted their ways;" for it is said, "he being moved with fear, and warned of God, prepared an ark." There was the same previous warning given to the generality, of God's intention to animadvert upon the wickedness of the world; and Noah was made use of as a "preacher of righteousness" to warn men hereof, to give them premonition; but nobody regards it but he and those few of his family that were saved with him. This, in general, God looks upon as a piece of friendliness towards him, when any (though first taught and influenced by himself) do single and sever themselves out from an infidel world, and do receive the report he makes from heaven of the great things he hath designed, and hath put into a method in order to the recovering and saving of lost souls.

But this I do only pre-lay as a general. That I may more distinctly speak to this matter, I shall shew you what friendliness is shewn towards God in and about the exercise of this faith, the faith that will justify and save in such things as, 1. faith doth suppose, 2. such things as it includes, and 3. such things as it infers and draws after it. Things of all these sorts will appear to have in them great indications of a friendly mind towards God; and such as are indeed the peculiarities of those few believers, in comparison, that are to be found among men.

I. Such things as this faith doth suppose. And when I speak of this faith, I especially mean that very unitive act of faith by which the soul closeth with God in Christ, and so whereupon it is mediately in a justified estate, and entitled to a final and eternal salvation. Speaking of that very act which is formally unitive betwixt God in Christ and the soul, there are several other acts that may come under the general notion and name of faith, that are among the things presupposed unto this act, and so are to be spoken to under the head of things supposed; but I shall begin somewhat lower, and at what is more remote, as,

1. The soul's listening and enquiring after God, which this believing in God must needs be understood to suppose, in an ordinary course at least. They that at length come to believe in him as Abraham did; they must be supposed, however inwardly and secretly prompted hereunto, to have made some inquiry after him first. The most content themselves to be as without God in the world: but when

he hath once touched a mind with a vital touch, it begins then to rouse and stir itself. Why, what? Must it not have been some infinitely good and absolutely first Being that hath made me and all things? Why have I lived in that contented, voluntary ignorance of him so long? The most are habitually "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart," as the expression is, Eph. iv. 18.—"They are willingly ignorant of God," 2 Pet. iii. 5.—"They like not to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28. It pleaseth them not, it is not grateful to them; "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. But when he secretly prompts a soul and saith to it, "Seek my face," there is immediately an answer in the heart,—"Thy face, Lord, we will seek:" we can live without God in the world no longer; this is a wearisome, gloomy sort of life. Why, then, the soul is awakened to enquire, when it saith (what so few say) "Where is God my maker, that giveth songs in the night?" Job xxxv. 9. Here is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards God, when the soul grows impatient of distance from him, unacquaintance with him, and ignorance of him. The most can go from day to day and have nothing to do with God; they can open their eyes in the morning, when the eyelids of the morning open upon them, and never say, where is God?—walk all the day long, and never concern themselves with him, as if they were a sort of absolute beings, and that this were the sense of their hearts; "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee," as in Jer. ii. 31. Full of themselves, and full of the emptiness and vanity of a world made subject to vanity; and so there is no room for God, and they have no business with him. Why, when this habitual aversion so far wears off, and is counter wrought, as that the soul begins to enquire and look out and think with itself, How came I into this world? and how came there to be such a world, when neither I nor it could be without a Maker, nor that Maker without a ruling power over all; why then, "where is God my maker?" he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might feel and find him out; and when this end in designing, and making, and sustaining such a world, and such an order of creatures in it, is so far advanced and comported with, Now, saith God, my creature begins to rouse and look after me; then, he reckons, is the first appearance of a friendly mind towards him, when souls grow impatient

and say, I can live without God no longer. I pray you consider this: with such as never had to do with God, and never intend to have, all this will signify nothing; but with those that have such a design, and would fain have a friendship established betwixt God and them, these things will signify much, they will have their weight; they can weigh nothing with those whom they do not concern. But whosoever can apprehend these as my concernments, they are things that concern me, my soul, my life, my welfare, my eternal hope; with such, what I say will be considerable. And wheresoever there hath never yet been any friendly concern between God and the soul, it is high time to look after it; and if ever you will on your part, it must begin to express and shew itself in such a thing as this, to wish that a solicitude be awakened in you, How shall I do to find out God, that he should have given me breath and being, that I should continually have lived, and moved, and had my being in him; and yet all this while not be seeking after him, to feel and find him out? this is the greatest enmity imaginable. And ergo, to have a contrary frame and disposition of spirit beginning to express itself, must be somewhat of friendship.

2. There is a certain friendliness towards God in this matter, in the acknowledgment and entertainment of that revelation that he hath made of himself in his word as true and divine, upon those characters and concomitant evidences of the divinity thereof appearing and manifestly offering themselves to view. To a soul that hath been stirred up to enquire and bethink itself, How shall I come to some knowledge of him that made me and made all this world, and in whom alone that satisfying goodness is to be found that will be an adequate and suitable portion and rest for my soul! When any are awakened thus to enquire and look about, and, looking about them, to see in the midst of all that darkness that doth spread itself over all this world, a collection of divine light, shining forth as in this revelation and discovery of God in his word—Oh, how grateful is the first appearance thereof!—when the glimmerings and glimpses do shine in this discovery, this revelation of God, how grateful is it, wheresoever there is a friendly mind towards God. And if now hereupon the soul doth receive the testimony that is contained in this word, in this scripture-revelation, this God esteems friendly. The generality of men do not receive it; this is their condemnation, that "light is come into the world, [that light

which shines in the gospel discovery] but men love darkness" more. If any do love the light more than that darkness, though it be from God, it is nevertheless kindly accepted, and taken by him as an indication of friendliness towards him. And we are to consider to this purpose, that however there be justice in this towards God, there is nothing the less of friendliness; for that wheresoever there is justice towards men, the acts and exercises thereof signify nothing if they do not proceed from love; for love comprehends all that duty that men owe towards one another, and it is "the fulfilling of the law." If I do a just act towards a man, and do it not from a spirit of love, there is but a mere carcase of that which is really and truly a duty, the life and soul thereof are wanting. It is love that fulfils the law in the whole extent of it: love to God fulfils all the precepts that enjoin my duty towards him; and love to man, all the duties I owe to man. And ergo, do not think that is no friendship towards God to receive the discovery he hath made of himself in his word as from him, because it is right, or because it is but justice towards God; for it must be a spirit of love that must animate all the duty I do, whether towards God or towards men; else it is all worth nothing. As there is malignity and malice in infidelity, so there is love and kindness in faith; in the assenting act of faith I mean; for the unitive act (you have been told) I am to speak to afterwards; and what I am now speaking to I put in under a distinct head of things presupposed unto that. But let it be considered that the main thing that doth keep off souls from God in infidelity, (comprised even in the nature of infidelity) is the enmity that it carries in it. How observable is the expression in John v. verses 42 and 43, compared together; "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." What is the reason of this partial disinclination to receive that testimony of God, when there is no such aversion appearing to receive and rely upon the human testimony of such, at least, as are not known to have forfeited the credit of their word? What is the reason? Why that the love of God hath no place in such hearts. They do not bear a friendly mind towards God; ergo, they can believe one another, but will not believe him: they have so much kindness for one another, that they will take one another's word; but they have so little kindness for God, that they will not take his word. A most horrid case; but yet

a plain one. So it most manifestly is—"Ye will not believe my word, because the love of God is not in you." Ergo, it is a sure indication of a friendly mind towards God, when there is any aptitude to entertain that revelation he hath made of himself and his word, and to acknowledge the characters of divinity that do appear upon it, rejoicing to behold any beams of heavenly light shot down into the midst of that horrid darkness which hath spread itself over this world. But again,

3. There is yet a further and more particular appearance of such friendliness towards God, when his reconcileableness to man declared in this revelation of his, is received as a true discovery of him. When the souls of men come to entertain such notices concerning him, that though he is offended (and most justly) against a sinful world, he is yet willing to be reconciled to sinners, bears a placable mind towards them. This is that which the most will not believe. There is such ill will towards God, as seals up the hearts of men in obduration, and ergo, this discovery will not enter. It is one thing to have a notion of it in the mind, and another thing that it have its seat and place with effect and power in the heart; for (as there will be occasion more fully to discourse hereafter) there's the principal seat of that faith upon which God accounts men righteous, and doth finally save them. There its principal seat is to be sought and found. Therefore, when we tell men from the word of God, and out of the gospel of Christ, that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners, they can give us the hearing, and give a faint assent; this notion is received into the mind (as a great many others are that belong both to the natural and prenatural parts of religion) without distilling any influence upon the heart and will. But if this discovery of God, that he is reconcileable unto sinners, once come to touch the heart, the reception and entertainment that is given it there, speaks the greatest friendliness towards God. It is with the heart that this must be believed, and the believing heart is in this point a friendly heart towards God. It is because this belief doth not obtain and take place there, that God hath so many irreconcileable enemies. They will not believe him reconcileable, and ergo, they will not be reconciled themselves. There is a consciousness, a guiltiness, which is seated in the natural conscience, that poisons the soul with enmity against God. Such a thing as was found in the spirit of Cain: "My sin is greater than can be forgiven." And

what was the product of that flat aversion from God?—self-banishment. Let me get to the utmost distance from him that I can, and keep at the utmost distance;—I have offended him, there is a nemesis, a doom, a judgment that hangs over my guilty head, and he will not be reconciled. Thou saidst, there is no hope. Jer. ii. 27. What then? I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Because men do despair of God's being reconciled to them, ergo, are they living a perpetual warfare and wilful wandering. I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. There is no hope in God that he will ever be reconciled to such a wretch as I. But if reconcileableness towards sinners be entertained, then that soul can be persuaded of it, that his word doth in this respect represent him truly. This is from the friendliness of his heart, that hopeth all things, believeth all things, and thinketh no evil.

As it is with love towards men, it doth not allow us to entertain suspicions and surmises concerning them that love us. It will not allow us to think them false, perfidious, treacherous, hypocritical. So much less will this love to God allow us to think so of him, that when he publishes his reconcileableness to sinners unto the sons of men, so expressly in a gospel sent into the world for that very purpose, if there be a friendly mind towards God, it will never allow a man to think he will but deceive in all this: all these are but false colours, they are but deceptive disguises that he hath put upon himself to make himself look speciously, and be well thought of in that world, that he hath even now forsaken and left. A friendly mind towards God banisheth all such thoughts as blasphemies of the divine goodness, and can allow them to have no place. And ergo, whereas his gospel proclaims "glory to him in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men;" a friendly disposition towards him shews itself in the joyful reception of this revelation of him, as most certainly and infallibly true.

4. And this friendliness towards God further appears in the soul's deserting and coming off from this world, upon that discovery that God hath made of himself. As there is nothing can draw off a soul from a suitable good unto the sensitive nature that now prevails in the state of apostasy, and is growing in degenerate natures, nothing can draw it off from an adherence and addictedness to such a world, the sensible objects whereof are grateful and suitable to

a soul lost in sense and buried in carnality, but the revelation of something greater, and better, and more suitable. And wheresoever there is faith in God, beginning to obtain and take place, by what degrees it doth take place in the soul the world loses its place; these two being directly opposite to one another, standing as rivals and competitors, God and this world. Therefore, by what degrees soever the soul approacheth God, it draws off from the world. And whereas the friendship of this world is enmity to God, by how much the more the soul inclineth to a state of friendship with God, so much the more it is enmity with this world, as God's rival and competitor for the heart and soul. Under that notion it cannot endure it, but abhors from it. This friendship with God, which faith doth so directly tend to, and consist in, in so great part, must infer a continued and habitual enmity against this world, not abstractly considered in itself; (for every thing that God made is good) but as it is now become an idol of jealousy set up in opposition to God, that doth, as it were, appear as a substituted deity put in God's room. The world and that carnality appear together, which entertains it and embraces it. They do share deity between them, which belongs only to God. Men fall into a league with this world for themselves, to gratify themselves, and their own carnal inclination out of it. But so the world and self, complicated and being in a combination, they engross the deity to themselves, which is due to the Most High. And under this notion, that when the soul begins to fall in with God, it falls out with the world; and ergo, it is expressly said in that forementioned place, that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. And so friendship with God must consequently be, under that notion, enmity against the world. But this is great friendliness too, towards God, when the soul retires and recedes from all that was dear and delightful to it before on this account. Now it finds him placable, reconcileable, willing to be at peace; I may come back to my God again, he invites me, he recalls me. What have I any more to do with idols? What is that base corruptible world now to me? It abandons all that it loved, all that it took pleasure in, upon his account, and for his sake. "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," (said Peter in the name of the other disciples, Matth. xix. 27,) "what shall we have therefore?" It is not to be thought he could suppose that the forsaking their little all could deserve any thing, if it were a thousand

times more than it was. But yet from the divine goodness apprehended, it raiseth expectation. Surely there is something to be got, though we have little to lose. And if we had all the world in our power, and were to abandon and throw it away, it were a contemptible, despicable nothing, in comparison of what we expect to find in him. But yet there is an expectation raised from the immense goodness and benignity of God, that he will never permit any to abandon former enjoyments to their loss. It is a thing that in itself deserves nothing; but that doth, as it were, carry in itself a promise of much of all that can be expected and thought of, inasmuch as it hath in it a friendly mind towards God, which having to do with a being of infinite goodness, can never be without acceptance, or without its reward. Nay, by how much the more we do despise our all of this world upon this account; (and ergo, must apprehend our doing so, to have so much the less of merit in it, because the things we leave and forsake we judge at the same time to be worth nothing) yet so much the more is there of a friendly mind in it towards God; for he is so much the higher in our estimation and affection, by how much the more any thing that is opposite is lowered and depressed there. But then

5. The reception of that particular testimony that God hath given us in his gospel concerning his Son, that hath peculiarly much of a friendly mind towards God. That we entertain the discovery which he makes to us of his Christ, the immediate object of that unitive act of faith which comes next to be spoken to. But this must be previous and supposed to it; i. e. that we receive the discovery that God hath made of Christ. This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased, I recommend to you, hear him as one sent forth from me. The voice came from the execellent glory giving this testimony concerning the Son of God. Now as the rest of the world who have this revelation, but believe it not, do by their unbelief make God a liar, they that do believe this testimony set to their seal that God is true: this he takes as an expression of friendliness towards him. The rest of the world they are in a conspiracy, a confederacy to make him thought a liar, that he treats them with deceit. This notion of him men do so propagate as that it insinuates into their hearts, though in their minds they have no formal notion of it; they carry it towards him, as if they took him to be a deceiver, an impostor, one that intended to delude them by that representation, and by that scheme and model of things

which he lays before them in the gospel of his Son. But they that receive this testimony, do now give an open proof before all the world of the regard and reverence which they have to that recommendation that God hath given of his Son to the children of men. Look to those expressions, John iii. 33, "He that hath received this testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;" (where he is speaking of the testimony given in the gospel concerning Christ.) And that other, 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth not the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, (as the next verses tell us) He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." So that he stands forth as a visible example and witness for God against the infidelity of a wicked world, that will not entertain this discovery which carries such bright lustre and glory with it, made unto men concerning his Son, and his design of saving sinners by him. This is friendly towards him, to give him the glory of his truth; and it will be matter of triumph and glorying at the great day, (as in 2 Thess. i. 10,) "When our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear with his holy angels, he shall be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe, because our testimony was received in that day." Upon this account will he appear glorified in the eyes of men, when he hath such a remnant to produce and shew before the world. Here are these that would believe me when the generality of men would not. These are they with whom my truth was a sacred and adorable thing, when it was turned into a lie by the wicked, infidel world. Here is a peculiar friendliness towards God in this remnant, when the minds of men are generally so disaffected towards him by that infidelity which carries dislike and enmity in the very nature of it.

And this leads to the unitive act of faith itself, wherein we shall shew there is much of friendliness towards God and his Christ essentially included.

SERMON XXXIV.*

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

We have shewed what this faith doth suppose. Now we come, in the second place, to shew what it doth import. And this we shall let you see by shewing you, 1. What this faith doth more essentially include and denote; and then also, 2. What things it doth connate, that do go along with it, and which must come into consideration, as ordinarily this faith is to be expressed God-ward; and so will greatly heighten this friendship towards God, and represent it so much the more a generous and a glorious thing.

I. Consider as to the import of this faith, what it more essentially includes and carries in it. As,

1. Such an assent to the gospel as draws the heart along with it. That faith upon which God doth justify and save, is not a dead, inanimate thing. "It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. Such a faith as doth not carry the heart along with it signifies nothing, doth nothing any more (as the apostle speaks in the close of this chapter) "than a carcase would do without the soul." And this matter, if it were well considered, would easily reconcile these two great apostles, which do both of them discoure so distinctly and designedly about Abraham's faith as the precedent to the whole community of believers, in reference to the matter of justification. It was far from the thoughts of this apostle, (as is most evident) to think that faith, be it never so lively, so active and operative, could signify any thing to procure acceptance, or cause God to look upon a believer with so much the more favourable and propitious an eye. If it it be never so much a living thing, it signifies nothing, as to obtaining divine acceptance. Nor did it ever come into the mind of the other apostle, to suppose that an unactive, dead faith, would serve the turn to bespeak a man accepted with God. It is very plain this one thing agrees with them both. And it is the apostle Paul's expression, mentioned to you before, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Not that when he believes unto righteousness, his faith procures that righteousness to be reckoned

* Preached November 26, 1693.

to him, or that is any cause of it. But God will never clothe any such one with righteousness, whom he doth not also inspire with a spirit of faith, with a vital faith, with a faith full of vital power, that accompanies it and goes along with it. Both being from the same fountain of grace, in two distinct streams, the collation of righteousness, and the communication of faith. And these do not cause one another; but the grace of God in Christ causeth both. As when two streams go from one fountain, one stream doth not cause the other stream, but the fountain causeth both.

And it is very observable to this purpose, how joint a testimony these apostles bear to one and the same thing, in that (Acts xv. 9,) "God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith." He accepts a Jew as well as a Gentile, and a Gentile as well as a Jew, without difference; makes no difference, purifying their hearts by faith. If they have such an operative faith as shall be accompanied and followed with heart purity, there shall be no difference that one was a Jew and the other was a Gentile. And it is to be considered to the present purpose, that both these apostles were in this synod at the same time; and there was nothing but the fullest consent among the holy members; all inspired by the Holy Spirit of that assembly at that time. These, indeed, were Peter's words; but you find James speaking afterwards. And Paul was sent from Antioch thither. But what was agreed there, seemed meet to the Holy Ghost and to them, as the matter is concluded and shut up. No difference was put between one and another, a Jew and a Gentile, faith purifying their hearts. If they did agree in that, they could differ in nothing considerable besides. And God will make no difference, purifying their hearts by faith; that must make and argue this faith to be a moving, active thing in them. Stagnant waters are dead; springing waters are wont to be called living—*aquæ salientes.* It is such a faith as carries an agitation with it in a man's soul. So that whereas it is a fountain agitated by that faith, it will be a self-purifying fountain. Fountains purify themselves—standing waters do not so. This fountain it hath a self-purifying power put into it; not as if it hath this of itself, but as the Divine Spirit, moving the fountain by a vital principle put into it, purifies it; and this was the agreed concurrent sense of these godly inspired men, met at Jerusalem at this time. A mighty testimony it was against that dead, spiritless faith, in which a great many place all their

confidence for eternity and another world. I am a believer, and, ergo, I am safe, I am well. What a believer are you? What doth your faith do? Doth it move your heart? Doth it carry your soul with it? Is there a spirit or power of faith working in your faith? Doth it operate? Doth it transform? It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. But when any must say, My faith lets my heart lay as a dead thing still, as dead as a stone; an impure thing still,—as impure as a heap of mud;—is this indeed, the faith upon which you will venture for eternity? A faith that effects nothing, a mere negative faith; to wit, a faith which only stands in not believing the contrary, or not disbelieving such and such things. You do not disbelieve such and such things. No more doth a brute disbelieve them. If that be all your faith, a brute may have as good a faith as you; that is, that you do not believe the contrary, or you do not believe such and such things.

But then you are to consider what it is that faith, which avails to justification and salvation, doth believe; or what it is the belief of, as well as what sort of believing it is. That is, that representation which God makes of himself in Christ, as willing to become our God. See how he did represent himself to Abraham, when it was said, that Abraham believed God, upon which he was counted righteous. Why he tells Abraham he would make him a blessed man, make him a blessing, make all the nations of the earth blessed in him. He tells him of a seed, by which seed eminently and most principally the apostle tells us, Gal. iii. 16, was meant Christ. "Not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ." Christ, as comprehending the whole community of living believers in himself. It was such a faith, ergo, as Abraham had, as by which he apprehended God in Christ, and was thereupon drawn into covenant with him. "I will establish my covenant with thee." And that covenant the apostle to the Galatians also tells us, was the covenant of God in Christ, which was but then confirmed with Abraham. Not first made; it was but confirmed when it was made with Abraham; so as that the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after it, could not disannul it. It was a covenant not to be disannulled, being a covenant of God in Christ, and, ergo, must be understood to be made from the beginning, from the first apostasy. But with Abraham it was confirmed. It was the representation of God in Christ that was the object of this faith. And this faith was

a thing full of life and spirit and power, in reference to this object, God in Christ. Our Saviour himself testifies that Abraham saw his day, at that great distance of time, and rejoiced in the sight. "He saw it, and was glad." It is such a faith of this discovery of God in Christ, as doth affect the whole soul, and mightily operate to the centre of the heart itself. It is such a faith upon which God justifies and saves. But such a faith cannot but carry great friendliness in it, when it carries a man's heart towards God; and that you know is the seat of friendship. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? When the heart is attracted and drawn to God in Christ, here is friendship. It is carried in the very essence of this faith. It is faith that raiseth desire in the heart. Oh, that I might have this God for my God in Christ, and come into most inward union with him. It is a faith that raiseth hope in the soul; such an assent to the truth of the representation, upon which the soul doth not only desire, "Oh, may I have this God for my God;" but hope too that it shall, that it may. As no doubt there were such affections raised in Abraham's heart upon that discovery which God made of himself to him. I am God, all sufficient, walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will establish my covenant with thee. Such a treaty, such a transaction as this, when God did thus represent himself, and the representation was believed, could not but raise such affections in such a soul. Now here is the very heart and soul of friendship in all this. All this speaks a friendly mind, a propense mind toward God in Christ. And,

2. Upon such a vivid, lively, operative assent, there ensues (as what is most essential to this faith too) an appropriation of God in Christ for ours. This is the *complexus fidei* by which it doth embrace its object. "And herein this faith works by love." Gal. v. 6. And love, you know, is the very form and essence of friendship, the vital form of friendship. It is a faith that works by love, wherewith the soul takes hold of God in Christ. We must suppose, in order of nature, desire and hope to be raised before. But now here is the entire consent of the will animated by love, and closing with the amiable object, God in Christ. What a representation is here! saith the transported soul. And nothing now remains but to take hold; for I find here is a free offer made, and if I will have this God to be mine, I may; and if I will have this Christ to be mine, I may.

What remains but to accept them? Nothing is more essential in this faith, than this appropriative and acceptive act, by which we take God for our God, and receive Christ for our Lord and our Jesus. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord (this is the imitation of the Christian course) so walk ye in him." Col. ii. 6. And again,

3. There is the soul's self-resignation carried also, as most essential in this faith. And that is the most friendly thing too that can be conceived. As there is the greatest friendliness in accepting, sure there must be equal friendliness in giving, when it is oneself delivering up oneself. When the soul accepts, appropriates this God, this Christ, falls before him, saith My Lord and my God, it hereby comes into that vital unitive closure with him that speaks, as much as any thing can, the very heart and soul of friendly love, as hath been said. But then also, when at the same time it doth receive and give, takes God in Christ, and gives itself, delivers up itself; What? Can this be the act or part, or heart of an enemy? Will I give away myself to an enemy? or to whom I bear an enemy-mind? a disaffected mind? This can never be, I received God in Christ from the apprehension I have of the great and glorious excellencies and suitableness of the object. To as many as believe, he is precious. (1 Pet. ii. 7.) So saith the soul concerning Christ, who is the immediate object of this faith. And it hath the like apprehensions concerning God, who is the final, terminative object of it. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Ps. lxxiii. 25. These do both of them equally influence this accepting and this giving. I take God in Christ for mine, because I have those high and great and honourable thoughts of God in Christ. I give myself to God through Christ, for the same reason, upon the same account, as having the highest and most honourable thoughts of them both. And in this resignation, or surrender, we are to consider that as friendliness hath the plainest part that can be, so trust and faith have an essential ingrediency hereinto. Or (which is all one) that resignation hath an essential ingrediency into such faith. For when I give up myself, with what temper of mind is it? I do not give up myself to destruction, but I give up myself in order to salvation. This resignation is in trusting or committing of ourselves: "I know whom I have believed, and that he will keep what I have committed to him to that

day." That committing of ourselves speaks a most friendly mind. Would any one commit himself to an enemy, or to one towards whom he bears the heart of an enemy? And,

4. This faith doth most essentially include an heart-quieting recumbency, so far as this faith prevails. It is not in degree perfect; but we speak of the nature of it, of the kind of it. It carries with it an heart-quieting recumbency, so that the soul doth abet its own act in what it doth herein, as the mentioned expression imports. "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed." Not ashamed, why, what room or place can there be for shame in such a case? Yes, if a man hath mistaken; if he thinks he doth the part of a fool, he hath reason to be ashamed. But saith he, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed: therefore he abets his own act in this matter. It was the wisest course that ever I took in all this world, to dispose of myself so, so to commit myself: it is a thing wherein I can justify myself to the highest, that I have made this venture. It hath not been a rash, inconsiderate act. It is not a thing I am ashamed of, I shall never repent of it. Repentance carries shame with it. Whatever act I repent of, I am ashamed of it, as having done a foolish thing, betrayed weakness and impotency of mind in what I have done. But I shall never be ashamed of this. For I know whom I have believed, that he will keep, and is able to keep too, with an engaged ability, that I have committed to him (my pledge, my depositum) against that day. Still there is in this the greatest friendliness; that I can repose myself in the faithfulness and truth of him to whom I have committed myself, and upon whom I have placed my reliance in reference to the greatest concernments tha can lie upon my heart.

II. Consider as to the import of this faith. Not only wha it more expressly denotes, but (as the case is) it must connote. And it doth indeed connote many great and concurrent difficulties which render the friendliness that is in it so much the more generous and glorious a thing. As,

1. This trust is placed upon one whom we never saw. I trust to one altogether out of sight. Look to the final object, God himself; the invisible God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. And for the intermediate object, Christ, as to the most parts and most ages of the world, hitherto unseen. Even in that time wherein he might have been seen on earth, yet to a great many Christians he

had not been seen. As Peter writes to the scattered Jews, though he lived and died in their country. But they were scattered, and in a dispersion, yet he saith, "Whom having not seen, ye love," &c. A glorious thing, and speaks a friendly mind. So far to trust one I never saw, and never can see. If you were persuaded to put your trust in such and such an one that you hear of, you would say I never saw his face. Trust him! Why should I trust one I never saw? That is no argument against this trust. I will trust him, (saith the believing soul) though I never saw him, nor can see him. I have such an account of him, and know so much of him in a way wherein I cannot be mistaken, cannot be deceived, though I never saw him, nor ever expect to see him, (to wit, the invisible God with eyes of flesh) yet will I trust in him without a suspicious, misgiving heart. Here is glorious friendliness. And,

2. Here is this in the case too—it is trusting in him when one hath offended. This makes the difficulty the greater, and so the friendliness that appears in it is the more considerable and glorious. Any body that considers will easily apprehend how hard a matter it is to trust a person you know you have offended. I know I have displeased such an one, and yet to trust him, yet to place your trust in him. This is arduous, and so speaks this friendliness of mind so much the greater a thing.

3. It is trusting him with your very souls. This is yet higher, when my own convinced conscience tells me I have offended him, I have given him the highest and greatest cause of offence imaginable, and yet I will trust him, and trust him even with my very soul—the greatest and most considerable thing I have. This is high friendliness. The trust one placeth in any one is so much the more considerable and great, as the things are greater he trusts him with. As I say I trust such an one with such a sum of money, or I trust such an one with the management of such a part of my estate, or I trust such and such commodities that I value in his hands: This argues a kind and friendly propension that you will trust him so far. When you say I dare put my life into such a man's hand, this is a great trust and great friendliness. But when it comes to this, the intrusting your very souls, this is the highest friendship that can be thought. And you have nothing else to do with your souls, you must intrust them. Men's hearts must be won to Christ thus far, that they may

intrust their very souls with him. "Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Ps. xxxi. 5. And,

4. There is this further in the case, that you are to put your trust there only. That he is to be the only object of your trust. So that if this trust fail, you are lost. For you must not have another object of your trust. This is still the so much more glorious. Trust in him will consist with no other dependencies. It is the highest act of worship that can be performed, and it is a glory that God will not give to another. He will have no rival in his honour. It is the prerogative of Deity to be the object of trust even of the whole soul. Therefore, so much the greater thing is this trust.

5. You are to consider great humiliation, and self-abasement, accompanying this trust, which makes it so much the more generous a thing; for when you are to trust him alone, you are to distrust yourself. When you are to place a confidence in him, there must be a most absolute diffidence in yourself. I am nothing, I am vile, my own righteousness is but filthy rags. Whatsoever I might pretend to under that notion, it is all loss, and dross, and dung, in comparison of what I expect, of what I seek, and what I am to rely upon," as the apostle's expressions are, Phil. iii. 5, 6. There is the greatest submission in this trust. Observe that in Rom. x. the apostle gives the true reason why the proud Jews were so much hardened in infidelity that they would not submit to the righteousness of God: They knew not how to submit. There was so much of submission in it to comply with God's way and method of justifying and saving sinners, that they would no way in the world comport with. Their proud hearts could not endure it. If I place my trust, my soul trust, so and so, I must nullify myself; I must diminish myself to nothing; I must throw away all hopes in myself; I must allow myself to be a lost creature, a perishing creature, one deserving and worthy to perish, and to be thrown away for ever. Why one would not do so but towards one to whom we have a friendly mind! one may endure so to humble himself, to nullify himself towards a friend; but one would be loth to do so towards an insulting enemy, or to give him that occasion of insulting over us. And again,

6. This trust is placed upon one who will surely vindicate all inclinations to place trust any where else. He is one that I have offended, and if I falter in my trust, if I grow

suspicious of him, and think of placing my trust elsewhere, he will be offended a thousand times more. He thunders out curses if I decline, if my heart prevaricate, if I lean towards any other trust. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the living God." This is a great adventure, and that which only a friendly mind would carry one to, where there is so much hazard in the case. I trust when I have offended, I trust when if I be not right and steady to my trust, I offend a thousand times more; and yet I will venture, for my heart is towards him. Nothing shall discourage me, nothing shall keep me off from him.

7. It is trust to be placed without any favourable appearances to flesh and sense; for he promiseth me nothing that will be grateful in these respects: promiseth me nothing to which my flesh and sense have an aptitude and propension, or are like to receive any gratification by. If I do unite myself with him, intrust myself unto him, list myself one of his disciples, a devotee, one given up to God in Christ, what shall I get by it? He doth not promise houses and lands, or great things in this world; no such matter. But yet the believing soul will trust and unite with him, and give up itself unto him: this is great, and argues a strong propension of a friendly mind. And,

8. It is not only without such favourable appearances, but is against most formidable appearances. If I intrust myself here, and so dispose of myself, (as the disposal begins in the union of heart with God and Christ) I expose myself, at the same time, to all that a wicked world can do against me. When I make this venture, I must venture with him upon a raging and tempestuous ocean. I have all the troubles in view that this world, and the God of this world, the usurping God of this world, can give me. I am to expect nothing but storms and tempests and death on every hand. Yet the soul will believe not only without hope, (as such was Abraham's faith) but against hope, Rom. iv. 18, which makes it so much the more a glorious thing. And again,

9. This trust is thus placed, notwithstanding, not only against what is feared, but against what is felt by the believing person himself, in reference to himself, and generally to the whole community of believers. He meets himself, it may be, with a great deal of affliction; yet he will trust. Rough severities of providence many times, and the appearances of an enemy, are put on. God marshals up his own terrors as the world marshals up its terrors in battle-array

against him. But, saith a believing soul, "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Job xiii. 15. I will die at his feet; I will never leave him. Though "we are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter," nothing shall part us. Ps. xliv. 11. quoted Rom. viii. 36—39. Though we be trodden down into the place of dragons, and covered with the dust of death, no matter for that; we will never leave thee. We appeal to him, whether he yet see an inclination in us to deal falsely with him in his covenant. No, we will run through a thousand deaths for his sake, with confidence "that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, neither death, nor life, nor any other creature," shall ever work a separation. And this is high friendliness; sure the persons must needs be understood to be of a friendly mind towards God. And though not only this be their own experience, but they see it to be the common experience of the whole community of believers. Look upon former times and ages. There are whole armies of glorious sufferers and martyrs, whose records they can see and read over. What have these people endured and suffered for his sake! And yet they would trust him, yet they would cleave to him, and nothing would make them turn aside from following him. When you look back upon such an age and such an age, you find there have been multitudes could shew their scars, their wounds, their blood: This we have endured for the sake of God and Christ. And yet they would trust him still. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and are gone before into glory. Here is "the faith and patience of the saints." Where are they that have kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, the faith of Jesus, "that have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony, and loved not their lives unto the death?" as we have it in Rev. xii. 11. There is great friendliness in such a trust as this. Especially when, as

10. We shall consider that they expect no recompense for all this. See their fidelity, all their love, all their sufferings in this world; they never look to be recompensed here. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is not in this life that they have hope of recompence; their great hope of recompence is hereafter. When Abraham in the power, and in fruit of such a faith, quitted his all in this world, Abraham, saith God, "get thee up from thy kindred, from thy country, and from thy father's house." It is by faith, it is said, he obeyed, and

went, he knew not whither. Into what unknown country must I go? (he might say.)—It is no matter for that, whether you know or not; but follow God's call: and he abandons all, and follows. He trusts, makes a venture in the dark. This is the very nature of faith. Some pagans have understood so much about it. So our noted Voagan among the Platonists speaks of a faith above knowledge, that unites the soul most intimately with the supreme good; and which when a man doth act and exercise, they that have this faith, and are in the exercise of it, they do express it (as his expression is) shutting their eyes. They shut their eyes and trust, wink and trust. So doth Abraham in this:—go your ways into a country you know not—he goes by faith, he obeyed, and went, he knew not whither. I can (as if he had said) give no man an account whither I go; I am only obeying and following the divine call. It is in an unknown country that we all, who are believers indeed, are to expect our recompense. Where was it that he expected this? was it any interest in a terrestrial Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey? No: he deemed himself when there but in a strange country, to which he had such a right, as we nor any man in the world had before to any spot of earth, by an immediate divine grant, a grant from Heaven: the great possessor of heaven and earth assigns this spot for him and his posterity, and yet he behaves himself there as in a strange country; he, and Isaac and Jacob, that were heirs with him of the same promise, they declared themselves to be pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. The believer will say, Set me down any where upon earth and it is none of my country, whatsoever right I may have, as they had in that land. No; their faith was to cast anchor for them. But where? within the veil; within such an intexture as kept every thing from their view; an interjected veil; a veil cast between, and woven between them and the great object of their hope. But yet for all that, they trust and they venture; they cast their anchor upon that "which is within the veil, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered." This argues a strong propension of a friendly mind towards God, and towards his Christ, and towards this state of things, which they make the discovery and offer of. And in the last place,—

11. It is to be considered too, as that which signifies so much the more the friendliness of this faith; that it is a venture for eternity; such a sort of venture, that if I mistake, there is no correcting the mistake. If I misplace my

trust, the matter admits of no alteration, no remedy: it is a trusting of my soul, and a trusting it for somewhat that lies out of my sight, and whence there is no return, no coming back for me to make any terms with this world to any advantage, if I have misplaced my trust. No, here is an adventure made, never to be altered. And the soul doth it with this apprehension, with this prospect. Here I must venture my all, and for eternity, for an everlasting state.

It is fit we should understand what such a faith as the faith of a sincere Christian is, that we may not delude ourselves with names and shows and false appearances. There must be the nature of this faith in all those that believe as Abraham did; and his faith was spoken of as a precedential faith; and as he was the father of believers, the great example. He was not to be justified and saved by one sort of faith and we by another, but he and we by the same faith. So much it carries with it of a friendly mind towards its blessed object. But let us now observe in the close of this present discourse, before we enter on the third head, what this faith inferreth. I have hitherto observed only what it imports, either as directly noted, or as connoted. I pray let us bethink ourselves. Are not we strangers to these exercises of mind and spirit?—is not this a region and sphere of things that we are unacquainted with, and wherein we are little wont to converse?—do we know what belongs to such applications of mind and spirit inwardly towards the blessed God, and towards the Lord Jesus Christ? If we altogether are so, our religion, our christianity is a name, a show, a figment. If we are strangers to such applications of mind and spirit to God in Christ, and we have nothing that belongs to this friendly intercourse, I pray why is it? We would be loth to call ourselves God's enemies and Christ's enemies for all that. But yet he hath told us, he that is not with him is against him; and if we be indeed such friends to God and his Christ, such is to be seen in inward converse of heart and spirit with them; and nothing can excuse my not conversing with a friend, a great friend, a sincere friend, a wise friend, and a most obliging friend, but such things as these, for instance—Why, he is at a great distance, I cannot come at him. That is none of the case. He is not far from any one of us: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." What can excuse our not conversing with him who is so constantly nigh? That request which you have heard so much of, "The Lord Jesus be with thy

spirit," shews he continually may, and can be so. It is as possible as it is desirable, to have him with our spirits. What can excuse our slighting of a friend that we may be with every hour of the day, or every moment of the hour, if we will. What can excuse strangeness there, shyness there?

It cannot be said he is inaccessible: that would excuse: but there is no such thing. There is a throne of grace appointed on purpose, whereto we may freely approach: "there is a new and living way consecrated by the blood of Christ," leading into the Divine Presence. You cannot say you have no business with him: that would excuse you that you do not converse with such and such a friend—I have other great business in the world, but with him I have none. You cannot say so as to God; you have constant business with him, and he hath constant business with you. It is he with whom you have continually to do; "all things are open to him with whom you have to do." It is spoken in the present time, to shew that we have to do with him always; Heb. iv. 13. You cannot say your friend is so busy that he is at no leisure to mind you, if you come to him: no such thing; for you are directed "wherein soever you are called therein to abide with God," 1 Cor. vii. 24. Ergo, if you should find leisure, he would be always at leisure; he can mind every one, and will do so to those who apply themselves to him; "his eyes are ever towards the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." What can it signify but a disinclination and unfriendliness, that we have so little to do with God and Christ from day to day? It must signify, that other things so engage and take us up, that our concernments with God can have no room, no place in our hearts. They are things of another sphere, which we are most taken up about, and which appear to us more considerable—either the public affairs and concerns of a present world, or our own private ones. With a great many, we have too much cause to apprehend, the session of this present parliament is a far more considerable thing than that glorious consessus with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Those vast and glorious multitudes which are to make up that consessus. Oh, what friends are any society of men in comparison of the glorious society above! The affairs of this present time, let them be but considered in reference to the tract of time, what a little inch in the series of time is the present time of ours, about which many are so intensely engaged and taken up. When this junc-

ture of time is over with us, look upon the affairs but two or three months after, and what do they all appear and signify then? and yet the matters that be within our inch of time are, with the most, more considerable than a vast and endless eternity, and have more of their serious thoughts. The great question is, What will become of me in the great day when all the children of God are to be associated together, to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, there? Here is the great question, and it will be determined upon this single point—Have I that faith that belongs to that society as their characteristical note, as their distinction, as that by which they that belong to God are to be known from them who do not belong unto him, an heavenly from an earthly race and offspring?—Let me look into myself, and discern my own state and character, and see if I have any such faith in me as includes and draws the whole frame and current of my soul and all its powers towards God, and Christ, and Heaven, and an eternal state of things.

SERMON XXXV*.

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

The third thing which remains to be spoken to is,

III. To shew you what such a faith doth certainly infer. This also hath much of friendliness towards God in it; and it infers divers things that are so: as—

1. What is indeed very general, an entire living to God. If any soul do believe unto righteousness and salvation, so as now to be justified, and finally saved, that very faith of his will certainly infer the most entire living unto God; the most friendly thing towards God that can be thought. It is impossible that I can bear more of friendliness in my mind and soul towards any one, than when I consecrate my life to him—devote my life to him—devote myself to him. This is certainly inferred by that faith which avails to justification and salvation. I pray observe, that where you have that phrase of "living to God," Gal. ii. 19, that the whole

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context speaks of this very subject; justifying faith which is mentioned in this so expressly. Look at Gal. ii. from verse 16, to the end; "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Here is a most positive and delucid assertion of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, exclusive of works. But the apostle objects to himself, or obviates the objections of others in verse 17. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." This looks like a doctrine that serves the purposes of sin, and as if Christ came into the world to minister unto sin, to promise indulgences for it; not that men might cease to sin, but that they may sin with less danger and more safety. "God forbid," saith he—abhorred be any such thought, "if I build again the things which I destroyed, [and to admit this will be building what I had been aiming all this while to destroy] I make myself a transgressor," I fight with myself. All my doctrine causes nothing in it but inconsistency and self repugnance: "For, (saith he) I through the law am dead to the law." But, with what design? upon what account?—that I might live unto God: "I through the law am dead to the law." The law hath killed all the hopes and expectations I had of life, or justification by it, and hath as a severe, but as a faithful, dextrous schoolmaster, driven me to Christ, (as it is afterwards spoken in the same chapter) and constrained me to have recourse to him, to seek righteousness and life there. And what then? Is it that afterwards I might live as I list? No; far be it; it is only that I might live unto God; a life more entirely holy than it was possible for me ever to have lived upon other terms. And this living thus to God is manifestly spoken of as an inferred, consequential thing unto justifica-

tion, as a thing that naturally and necessarily ensues. But it is the most friendly thing towards God that can be imagined and thought of, that I should dedicate my whole life to him; and this doth not belong to friendship as friendship, but it belongs peculiarly to friendship with God. If any other friend should lay claim to the whole of my life, that my life should be spent entirely for him, and I should do nothing but for him; it is the highest insolence for him to expect or require it; but in this case it is the highest insolence to deny it unto this friend, for do not I owe my whole life to Him, if he hath justified me, if he hath imparted a righteousness to me? For what was I before, but a condemned lost creature. My life was forfeited. When he hath given me righteousness, he hath given me my life. The case cannot be thus among other friends. There is usually some sort of parity; but here is the greatest imparity and disparity. Another friend may have obliged me, perhaps I have at some time or other obliged one as much. But here the obligation lies all on one side; and it is the deepest obligation that can be thought. So that what was an hyperbole in the apostle to Philemon, "thou owest thy very self to me," (and he expresseth it with a diminution, not to say it,) it is no hyperbole here. Every justified person owes himself to his justifier, his whole life. For do not we know it was forfeited, entirely forfeited? If it be a state of justification, how did we come into it? It was a state of condemnation out of which we did pass. This is nothing to the ordinary friendship that is between man and man. But if an offended prince do take a condemned wretch out of his cage and chains, and from the dungeon and gibbet, into his arms, and embraces him; gives him life and his favour; and all the dignities and honours he can load him with; here is one owes his very self, in a subordinate way, as much as it is possible a creature can to a creature. Though the prince claims that life which he cannot preserve; for when he hath given it in one moment, a disease may take it away in the next. But here it is the most reasonable thing in all the world, that I should give my life to him who hath justified me.

And whereas all were under condemnation before; when a person is justified, he is made to "reign in life," as that most emphatical expression is, Rom. v. 17. Death had passed over all by one. By one man's offence, death reigned. But now they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, do reign in life by one Jesus Christ, or they shall do so, as some copies read it.

"They shall reign in life." The life of a king is reckoned a sacred thing, inviolable—not to be touched. He hath made us kings and priests unto God, having "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. i. 5. Then such lives are not to be touched. "Touch not mine anointed." They are all anointed ones, who have this life imparted to them.

I beseech you consider this case according to the mighty weight of it, and consider it as your own case, or that which is your case, or may be. For we are all of us here before the Lord, either in a state of condemnation, or in a state of justification this hour, at this time. If we have any of us cause to suspect that fearful state to be ours, a state of condemnation, I hope you do not intend to continue there; you think not, sure, of abiding so, in such a state as abiding in death, a condemned person in death, under death. Take we the state of our case as it is. Let every one view himself about this matter. Oh, my soul, what dost think of thy state? Either thou art a justified or a condemned man. What dost thou think of thy state? If thou thinkest thou art condemned, what is to be done in this case? It is dreadful to think of taking up and abiding here. But we are told what is to be done. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might bs saved." John iii. 16, 17. Believe in the Son of God, and this brings you under his righteousness, under his shadow, and the protection of it. It shelters you, covers you. "He that believeth in the Son of God, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." The sentence is past, though yet a reversible sentence—a sentence that may be reversed. Here our case is plain, to wit, that our main business must be to consider, do we believe in the Son of God? With such a faith as the gospel meaneth, with a lively, gospel faith. For if the gospel do mean one thing by faith, and I do understand quite another, it is not my mistaken notion that will save me. Do I think to be saved by a false notion? By a faith that is not only but notional, but my very notion also is false. That will not do. I am to consider, ergo, what this faith of mine infers. It signifies, or infers, my living to God, or it signifies nothing. How earnestly and emphatically is it inculcated in this Chapter, where the text

lies, that a dead faith cannot justify, and cannot save. A faith that hath no life in it, no spirit, no energy, no operativeness. It is not the works that proceed from faith that do justify, but it is a workingness in faith which is requisite to justification:—a faith that will work, not a dead faith. And we are, ergo, to know, that in the same instant when a man's faith is available for the obtaining of righteousness for him, it is available for the obtaining of life too, of a vital principle. God doth never give these separately, he always gives them together. This faith unites the soul with Christ. He is righteousness and life to it at once. His righteousness (as hath been told you,) never continues one moment the clothing of a carcase, of a dead soul. It is never designed to be the habit and apparel of such a soul. It is too rich a thing, too glorious a thing, to be so. There is no righteousness without having of Christ. "But he that hath the Son, hath life," at the same time when the soul is caught into union with him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is made unto us holy life upon our being in him, as he is thereupon made righteousness to us. 1 Cor. i. 30. This is plain, intelligible truth to any that will use their understanding, and apply their minds to consider it. But to speak a little more distinctly of this matter of living to God, as it is a thing inferred from, and consequential upon, the faith that justifies, I shall note unto you a few particular distinct heads, under this first more general one, as,

(1.) That whenever the soul is brought to believe unto righteousness, (Rom. x. 10) it is an heart principle, an heart exercise, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And whenever he doth so, he then receives a new spiritual life, a divine life. He was alienated from the life of God before, but now he comes to participate in a certain sort of divine life. This is so plain, that nothing can be more. "He that findeth me, findeth life." There is a blessing pronounced upon waiting on this account. "Blessed is he (saith Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Logos, or wisdom, Prov. viii. 34,) that waiteth, that is continually waiting at the posts of my house, for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." Findeth life; what doth that signify? It signifies that life in this world is a great rarity. A man may be long in quest of it, and not find it. It is a world lost in

death. "Death hath passed upon all by one, inasmuch as all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. If a poor soul that dwells in the shadow of death, casts about its wondering eyes and thoughts this way and that way, and saith, Where shall I find life? Why, (saith our Lord), he that findeth me, findeth life. All thy enquiries are in vain, and lost, and to no purpose, till thou meet with me. And you shall find me if you seek. "He that seeks me early, shall find me." ver. 17. "But if he finds me, he finds life." The very first meeting proves vital to him. For do but consider what is said in that same context, Rom. v. 12, 16, 17. Death had passed over all, reigned over all, unto condemnation. "All were dead," as the matter is also expressed, 2 Cor. v. 14. "If Christ died for all, then were all dead." Death passed over all. But how? Not only in law, but in fact. Pray observe it, all were dead, not only in law, but in fact too. Dead in trespasses and sins. Death did prevail, spread itself and its dismal horrid shadow over the very souls of men universally. And that by one—that one who first sinned, and so let in sin and death into the world. But then observe what is said in the 14th verse, That "that one was the figure of him who was to come." Which might signify, that as the former Adam did let in sin, and by it death upon all, so as to bring all not only under condemnation, but under an actual death, in the moral and more horrid sense, as death stands in opposition both to sanctity and to felicity. So as that in these respects it should reach the very souls of men, which, though they are naturally immortal, are morally (it is too plain) mortal; and not only mortal, but dead in the moral sense; to wit, as death stands in opposition to holy life, and as it stands in opposition to blessed life. So all were actually dead, as well as in law. Now if that first Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, pray consider in consequence what the second Adam was to be, and what he was to do. We are told that, "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was a quickening spirit." 1 Cor. xv. 45. So that now if you touch him, you touch life. If you meet with him, if you are joined with him, you are delivered by it. You have life not only in right, but in fact. As under the other Adam there was death, not only deserved, but as actually incumbent, death had passed over all. That is, here were the beginnings of eternal death, the beginnings of hell. Christ is the Lord from Heaven. If once you unite with him by that faith, that true faith of the gospel, you have

not only now a right to life, but you have the beginning of it, the inchoation of it in fact, as there was the beginning of death and hell in souls by the former Adam, the figure of this latter. And you are to reign in life by Jesus Christ. Life exults in you, springeth in your hearts, and is gradually springing up more and more towards eternal life. At least where that is not so perceptible, there are springings which import life, strugglings, and impatience of deadness. Whereas one that is entirely dead, is impatient of nothing—feels nothing. But if there be aimings and strugglings for life! Oh, this dead heart of mine; that I could find it to live more. This speaks life, a new life, which is working in you, and struggling in you, towards its perfection. And then you must not only gather here, that this living to God implies being made alive spiritually, a participant of an holy, divine life; but that it doth, in the next place,

(2.) Directly terminate on God. Here is life, living; and it is living unto God, which is the certain result and consequent of that faith that justifies and saves. It is, I say, a life that points at God; tends and works directly towards him. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 11. I pray note the appositeness and the emphasis of these words: "Dead to sin," having no mind to live a sinning life any longer. "But alive to God:" here is a new life now given—a spiritual, divine life. But what is it? a loose and a vagrant thing, that works at random, no one can tell how or which way? No, far be it from thinking so. It is a life directly pointing upon God; carries the soul in all its powers and thoughts, and affections and inclinations, in one current towards God. "Alive to God through Jesus Christ." There was nothing but deadness towards God before; life enough to every thing else, but only no inclination towards God;—no inclination, no concern with God. But now here is being made "alive to God through Jesus Christ." And this is the effect and consequent of union to Christ by faith; when we are planted together with him into the likeness of his death, and into the likeness of his resurrection, and by a certain kind of conjunction, or being married to him, we come to bring forth fruit unto God. As it is in the foregoing verses of Rom. vi. And,

(3.) This is further to be noted concerning this living to God, as inferred by and consequential upon that faith that

justifies and saves; that the workings and stream and current of this life, and of all the powers of the soul so enlivened, are directed towards God, and by a friendly affection. I pray note that further: they all work towards God; this life, and every thing that belongs to it, tends and works, and beats and contends Godwards. And what is that which makes it do so? A friendliness of inclination towards Him, and a suitableness of spirit unto him. They are, therefore, whenever they come to believe unto righteousness, to be called the friends of God; for now the whole life, from the power of friendly inclination, comes to be directed Godward. And so living to him is not from necessity and terror and dread, but from choice and kind propension. And,

(4.) It is hereupon necessarily consequent, that the soul is obliged to be very much in the exercises of religion: because in all the acts of religion there is a direct and immediate application unto God. If it be brought by the power and tendency of that faith which justifies into a course of living unto God, my life must be a thing, in the whole of it, sacred unto God; then it cannot be but it must be taken up in the exercises of religion, because therein it hath to do with God directly and immediately, but more remotely and collaterally when one is otherwise employed. The exercises of religion must thereby be delectable to such an one, for he liveth unto God; that the faith that justifies him hath inferred: from that very inclination of mind (saith he) I must be with God. And hence it will be the most remote thing in all the world from such an one to count the exercises of religion wearisome. But he will surely have that habitual estimate; though the flesh may be many times weak and wayward, the spirit will be willing so far as it is influenced and animated by such a life. And, therefore, among the other exercises of religion which such a life, and that faith which hath justified a soul, must imply, those exercises of religion which I have been so lately pressing upon you will be looked upon as no cumbersome imposition. The exercises of family religion, as well as those of the closet and those of the church, they will all carry a pleasantness, a felicity in them, proportionable to the measure of life received.

And I would have you now to consider the providence of God. It is observable to you and me that I was called off from this subject by a general agreement of my brethren to speak to you of that about family religion before I had

finished this. So that that discourse did even fall into this before I had concluded it. Observe the providence of God in it. For by this means it comes to pass that I am cast upon it to give you the shortest and fullest directory how to manage that business of family religion, as well as other exercises of religion, faithfully, pleasantly, and to purpose. Thus in general, whenever you are to do acts of religion, I pray consider your state. What is my state, wherein I am now to appear before God in this or that religious performance or exercise? Shall I appear before him as a justified person, or as a condemned person? Oh what shall I do if I am to appear ordinarily under the latter notion, as a condemned person? I come with my family (whatever they be) myself a condemned wretch. It is true it is a case that needs prayer: but it is a very uncomfortable case, for all that, when a person must do so from day to day. And, therefore, look well to your state. This is a state (as was told you before) that is not to be rested in, upon any terms. Though you are not to throw off the exercises of religion because you suspect your state to be bad, but in continuing of them to hope and expect it will mend and be better. But I would have you consider what it is. If you must come always in approaching unto God as a condemned person, or being a condemned person (whether you apprehend it or no) you will always approach to him either with the heart of a slave, or the heart of a stone. Either with a misgiving, affrighted, amazed heart, the heart of a slave or a stupid senseless heart, dead and cold as a stone. And therefore, especially see that such exercises of religion, as well as all other, do proceed from the conjunct principles of faith and love, or faith and godliness, towards God, the very things that the text hath in it, as you see, believing and being the friend of God. See that such principles animate all your religion, your family religion, and all other; otherwise, it goes all for lost.

[1.] The principle of faith. Without that it is impossible for you to please God in any thing you do, Heb. xi. 6. By it you come to offer an acceptable sacrifice. By faith, Abel offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; a more acceptable one. The word is a fuller one, a sacrifice which had a fulness in it compared with Cain's. Without it all your sacrifices, all your duties, will be dead formalities and nothing else; neither pleasing to God, nor pleasing to you; there can be no pleasure in them on the one hand, nor on the other. It is true you must go on in a course

of such duties, for the law of nature (as was told you) obligeth you thereto, and stands unrepealed: for (as hath been said) to suppose a repeal of the law of nature, is to suppose that God would divest himself of his deity, and you should be divested of humanity, both at once. As long as God is God, and man is man, this part of the law of nature, which concerns this state of things between him and man, must be unalterable, and can never be repealed. It is that which his law requires of you most indispensably. You must go on yet, still aim at bettering your state, and getting into that faith by which you shall be exempt from that condemnation. Into it, (I say) into the power and spirit of it. Indeed here lies the snare and danger, that when people first find themselves urged, and possibly are brought to apprehend the reasonableness and necessity of going on in such a course of duty, they expect to be justified in that way. No, never till you reach that faith which unites you to Christ. But this may be your way towards that faith. If you should think that your dead spiritless duties are to supply the room of Christ, vital faith, and a living religion proceeding from thence, this is all a mistake, and the most dangerous one that can be thought. To be justified by our own works, and such pitiful dead works, it speaks, as the Apostle's determination of the matter is, Gal. v. 4, 5, that "Christ is become of none effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." There is an eternal law binding you to such duty, and which is invariable and unalterable. But what then? Must you think of being justified by it? No; then Christ will be of none effect, and ye are fallen from grace. But we through the Spirit do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The great hopes of righteousness we wait for by faith, and by that alone, through the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, prompting and teaching us so to do. But this is the stupid, senseless, absurdity which hath seized the minds of multitudes, that when their works are least worth, then they expect most from them. When they are all worth nothing, they account of being justified by them; when they are all dead works. When a man's soul comes to be made alive, by how much the more he lives so much the more he sees that the best works he is capable of in this state and region of mortality can have nothing in them (though they have never so much of spiritual and divine life) unto the purpose of justification; for they never were designed to justle Christ out of his office. Nor are the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost to mingle or be

confounded, and made to interfere with one another, upon any terms. Such living works (when living) serve for other necessary and most excellent purposes, but not to justify us. They serve to qualify us for communion with God, and to enable us to serve and glorify him in the world, and to carry on a preparedness for us more and more for an inheritance among them that are sanctified, or with the spirits in light. See to that, that in all the exercises of religion (though while it is not so, they are not to be forborn and laid aside in families, closets, or otherwise yet) you aim to get that principle of faith which may mend your state, and make that good, and make you capable now (having your consciences sprinkled by Jesus Christ from dead works) of serving the living God, of living service suitable to the living God. And,

[2.] That other conjunct principle, love. Friendly affection, see that animates all your worship too, that your souls be carried towards God by friendly inclination: as was said, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." If you have that faith by which you believe unto righteousness, it will work by love; it carries your souls unto God by a mighty power of love. This is living to God, the certain consequence of that belief unto righteousness; or unto which God doth impute righteousness. And how applicable is this to the purpose aforementioned, i. e. that all the exercises of religion, and especially of family religion, be animated by that principle of love to God, or friendliness towards God, faith. Do but take notice, whereas the text speaks of Abraham, (he was the instance) "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Pray see what the inclination was that carried him to take that care of his family that he did, (Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.) "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I intend to do?" He is my friend, I cannot hide things from my friend; and why should he be looked upon as such a friend? "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, to serve me." Abraham will take this care of his family, because he is my friend.

See, therefore, that this principle goes into it, otherwise all goes for lost. Why are you so careful? Why it is kindness to my friend, my greatest and best friend. I see his interest low in the world, he is little called upon or sought after. There are few among men that will own him. But I do

it, because he is my friend, and because he hath captivated my very heart, and made that in some measure friendly unto him. That I may preserve, and that I may revive to my very uttermost his languishing interest in a lost world. He hath but a few friends, but I and my house will serve him; we will shew our friendliness towards him, whosoever do or will not do.

It comes in my way to give you this short, but full, directory in reference to the great subject we were so lately on. See that it be managed by that faith which will always justify. And see that it be influenced by a principle of love and friendly inclination towards God, and because you cannot endure his interest should be lost by your neglect, at least so far as you can signify any thing to the promoting and preserving it.

But here it may be said, that all the performances of an unjustified and unregenerate person are sin. But what? Are men obliged to sin? And should we urge them to sin? This admits of a very plain and easy answer. For,

1. There can be no declining of such performances when the injunction is in the law before us; but it must be upon a resolution not to do them. A resolution must be taken: I will not do them. There will be sin in doing, but there will be far greater in resolving not to do. The sin that is in doing, is only in the wrong manner, that I do not such a thing aright. But resolving not to do, is sin even in the very substance of that resolution.

How vast is the difference between that which is in the very substance sinful, and that which is only sinful in the circumstance. And,

2. This is to be said too, that not only the praying, the hearing, and the other acts of natural worship done by an unjustified, unregenerate person, are sin, but all their other actions too. The very ploughing of the wicked is sin. And what, therefore, must the whole unregenerate world do nothing? Are they all to sit still? If they eat they sin; if they drink they sin. Must they, therefore, starve, and neither eat nor drink? So absurd is such a pretence against doing such a duty, though it have no tendency at all to recommend us to God. And, indeed, were the duties of regenerate persons themselves never so entirely vital and holy, they would signify nothing for the purpose of recommending us to God. They do proceed from the Holy Ghost, but we must not confound the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to sanctify us, and qualify us for communion

with God. It is the work of Christ to justify us by his blood, and by his righteousness applied to us. It was Christ that was crucified for us. And, indeed, in reference to the matter of justification, even the most holy lives of the best of saints, they do more by positive influence for the justifying of Christ, than for the justifying of us. He is the eternal wisdom of God. And wisdom is justified of her children. We justify him; we shew that he did not undertake a vague thing, or come upon a vain errand into this world, when he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When his end and design is so far answered, wisdom is justified. This appears to have been the work and design of wisdom, that it was not a foolish undertaking; for it hath succeeded, it doth prosper, and shall more and more do so. By positive influence, it more justifies him than it does us. Our justification comes quite another way, being justified freely by his blood. All the holiness in the world could never make him amends for my having been once a sinner, and thereby incurred the divine wrath. It is true we have communion with God, walking in the light as he is in the light. But it is "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, that cleanseth us from all sin," so as that we may come guiltless into that communion. 1 John i. 7. The truth is, that the doctrine of faith, and righteousness, and justification, have been talked of, and tossed into mere airy and insipid notions. Though so excellent, so glorious doctrines, Christians have learned to dispute them into nothing: even as rich and generous wine, thrown from vessel to vessel till it becomes vapid and spiritless, and even without savour. It is the greater pity and shame it should be so, when the truth in these matters is so very plain and so very easy, that he that runs may read it. But many have had a greater mind to dispute and contend about these things, than to draw spirit and life and nutriment to their souls out of them.

In the exercises of religion, there is that in the faith by which they are justified and saved, that will prompt unto them, if that faith have place in them. And we are concerned to see to it that it have, that is to look to our state. And if we cannot conclude it to be for the present good, not to sit down there; for to sit down destitute of such a faith, is to sit down in the midst of death and under condemnation. That is a fourth thing which, living to God as a consequent of that faith which justifies and will finally save, doth carry in it of friendship towards God. Living to God, inferred by

such a faith, doth include in it a continual disposition to the exercises of religion, as the result of that faith, and as proceeding from an amiable and friendly affection towards God. But,

(5.) This living to God, as it is consequential of faith which justifies and will save, continually obligeth to do nothing against him to our uttermost or with self-allowance. Herein the reason of the thing speaks itself: if my whole life be a dedicated, devoted life, and all the powers and properties and actions belonging thereunto be so devoted, then there is nothing to be done against him who is the end and terminus of this life. I can allow myself to do nothing, I am surprized if ever I do any thing; it is an unintended, indeliberate thing, if any thing be done to the prejudice of his interest, that any thing diminisheth or soils his glory, or obscures and darkens it. It will be a grief to the soul, if it be a believing soul, (if it believe, by that faith which he justifies and saves,) that he is offended. For there is hereupon that entireness of self-dedication to him, that there is nothing of us left, excepted from obligation, or that can be directed against him or his interest in any kind. I can do nothing (saith the apostle) against the truth, but for it. I can do nothing; it is a certain sort of powerful impotency, an impotency that speaks power. I can do nothing against the truth; there is a positive principle obliges and prompts me otherwise. So the apostle, Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would:" indeed in neither kind. But it is plain the latter by the scope of that context must be meant, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;" that is the thing there to be proved, that walking in the Spirit is a certain remedy against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. How is that proved? Why, saith he, though it be true that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, yet the Spirit doth so strive and lust against the flesh, that ye cannot do what, according to your carnal, corrupt inclinations, you otherwise would. You cannot, you are inhibited; for you look upon yourselves as devoted ones; your life is consecrated, and all the powers relating thereto. And therefore, they cannot be used to counterwork the great design you have undertaken and engaged to serve. If I live unto God pursuantly unto faith in that gospel, then I cannot deliberately do any thing which hath a direct tendency to depress his interest or darken his glory.

(6.) This faith, as it infers our living to God, allows us

not to have any separate interest from him. The maxim of that great Pagan, "All things of friends are common," obtains strongly in this case. There is a friendship between God and me. I must not have a separate interest. His interest is mine, and my interest is his. So that if my life be a sacred, devoted life, when I buy, when I sell, when this and that way I am employed in secular and civil negociations, it will be looked upon as a most unlawful and wicked presumption to make myself mine own end in all this. No, God is my end; I live unto God. And that faith by which I am justified, obliges and prompts me hereunto; that is, so and so I do, that I may glorify God. Not finally that I may please myself, and indulge my own inclinations, and satisfy any appetite of mine; whether it be an appetite to live in pleasure, or whether it be an appetite to grow rich and great in the world. No, by no means; my life is a sacred thing, a devoted thing. "To me to live is Christ;" and so all the actions of human and civil life must terminate in God, as the end, if indeed I live to God. For if that be my end, it is my last end; and the last end is that into which all others do run. And whatsoever doth not serve the last end, doth really and finally serve none at all. And so all those actions are lost actions; i. e. they cannot come properly under the notion of human actions. If they do not refer to the last end, they are beside any end. It is the last end that infers whatever there is of order in this world; all runs into confusion that is not referred to the last end.

We are concerned to look carefully to our hearts about this, that we suffer not any secret dispositions and workings of spirit contrary hereunto. To go from day to day, and I cannot answer it to my conscience, that it is God that I have been serving; serving him in my calling, and not myself; Oh, in what peace can such an one lie down at night, when he hath been playing the idolater all day, and usurping upon Majesty—the Majesty of heaven? For it is God's prerogative to be all things, the last as well as the first, "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." For a creature born but the other day, lately sprung up into being, to rival the universal Lord of heaven and earth, and to take upon him as if he were God—I will be my own end, pursue an interest of my own, separately and apart from God—this is to pluck himself from under the rule of the Universal Ruler, and to say, I will have no Lord over me; I am my own, and not his. But a man's having devoted his life, so

as that he can be said to live to God, is necessarily exclusive of all this. And thereupon again,

(7.) This living to God, consequent upon justifying and saving faith, will oblige and prompt us to take in God with us in all our affairs; to go about nothing without him; for we are to act dependently in every thing; to commit our way unto the Lord. Committing is believing; committing is trusting. And we are to cast all our burden upon him, and all our care upon him, expecting he will care for us. This living to God includes. Every man, as he is called therein, let him abide with God. 1. Cor. vii. 24. Implying, you have nothing to do in all this world, which you cannot better do with God than without him. You have no business to do in all this world, wherein you need to sever and part yourselves from God. No, take him in with you, as your first and last. And if we design him as our end, so as that he be our last, it will necessarily infer the other too. If I am to act for him in every thing, I must act from him; otherwise I act unproportionably. God cannot be served but with his own. What is to be done for his glory, is to be done by his power. This is that trust in God which allows us not to lean to our own understanding, but to commence with him in all things, and have our eye keep quick turns with Him; ever and anon to look up and apply ourselves to him, and appeal to him; Lord, thou seest that I am aiming at thee, as I do depend on thee for conduct and support all along in my way. And,

(8.) This living to God, as it is consequent of such a faith, implies, and must bring about, our enjoying of all things in him and with him, and in order to him. As well what we enjoy, as what we do, is all in him, if our life be once a devoted life. For we are to consider life, not only as an active principle, but also as a fruition. And a life devoted to God, doth as well enjoy all things in God, whatsoever he doth enjoy, as all for him. So that this will be the sense of a believing soul (which is prompted by that faith to a course of living unto God), "I have no enjoyment under the sun, that carries any taste or relish in it without God." Many will say, "Who will shew us any good?" But Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall be more to me than the increase of corn and wine and oil. When men can please themselves with the creature (excluding God, setting God aside), solace themselves with this and that creature-comfort apart

from God, neglecting and disregarding God; this is quite beside the genius of a life sacred to God,—most contrary to the notion of living to Him. For life is the principle by which we enjoy what is enjoyable, as well as the principle by which we do or practise what is practicable. And that is one thing which that faith which is justifying and will save, doth infer, which carries very great appearance and expressions of friendliness in it, living to God. The most friendly thing we are capable of doing. And it appears so, if we consider the several mentioned things that do concur in it. But,

2. It infers too, in the next place, liberty towards God, as well as living to him. The next thing to life, is liberty. A life dedicated to God, is inferred by a vital faith; and liberty is as certainly and necessarilly inferred. That is a liberty and freedom towards him,—and what is more friendly? By that you estimate friendship; to wit, by liberty and freedom towards one another, which is the certain effect and consequent of vital trust. There is no such thing as real living faith, but from a spirit of faith, of which we read, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the same spirit of faith," the same that David had (he is quoting David there in that place;) "I believed, therefore have I spoken," saith the apostle Paul, as David had said so many hundred years before. We also believe, and, therefore, speak, having the same spirit of faith. So that there never was faith in the world, among them that did really and truly believe in God, but it was from one and the same spirit of faith, working uniformly in the several ages and successions of time. The same spirit of faith which David had in his time, the apostle had in his time. And he doth not speak of himself separately, but including other Christians, "We having the same spirit of faith." Lay this scripture to that other in the foregoing chapter, 2 Cor. iii. 17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Where that Spirit is not, the soul is in bonds. They that are not under grace, but under a condemning law (which they must be, by standing under a covenant of works), they are slaves; that covenant "genders to bondage," (Gal. iv. 24.) the covenant of grace unto liberty. And so all that are of the spiritual seed, born of the Spirit (as all true believers are) they are the children of "that Jerusalem which is free, and is the mother of us all." Hence, from that faith which instates a man in the grace of the covenant, he hath a freedom in his spirit towards God. And do but mark here-

upon the connexion between these two things, in that of the Psalmist, (Psalm lxii. 8.) "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him." He that hath no vital trust in God, is shut up towards God, his spirit is pent in, he hath no liberty towards God. When he goes to pray, or applies himself to any other work, he is like a man that cannot find his hands. He is manacled and bound, hand and foot. The spirit that rules in him, is a spirit of bondage: but the spirit of adoption, the spirit of sons, is a spirit of liberty and freedom. He can be free with God, as a man can be free with his friend. And it is friendly when he can be so; when he can pour out his soul to him, make his complaint, spread his desires, and represent his grievances. You can do so towards such an one, towards whom you bear a friendly mind, but not to a stranger. And,

3. Such a faith as justifies, and will save, infers a communication of secrets. This it infers, that you do not affect to cover or keep any thing secret from God. You cannot only use a liberty in expressing your desires, and making your complaints and moans to him, but you have nothing at all that you would reserve and hide from him, or make a secret to him. This, faith prompts unto. You very well know, that when we communicate a secret, that which we would have be a secret, we seek to commit and entrust it to a friend. I trust such a man with my secrets, that is friendship. Such a friendly mind accompanies faith towards God. I do not desire that any thing should be a secret with me from him. A guilty soul, that hath none of this faith, cries, Oh, give me a corner, give me a cloud, give me darkness, in which I may be wrapt up. When it is said "there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves:" it is the thing they seek,—that is the thing they covet. But the believing soul saith, I would have no secret between me and this great friend, nothing that I would reserve as a secret from him. So he is pleased to express friendliness to us, by communicating his secrets, by unfolding to us that gospel which was a secret from ages, and from generations by-past. So our Lord Christ argues his own friendliness to his disciples: "I have called you friends; for all things that have been made known unto me of my Father, I have made known unto you." John xv. 15. As you have largely heard. The same way are we to express friendliness to him. And faith will infer it, that we can freely open to him all our secrets, and

never be upon our reserves towards him. And not only because we cannot help it, but because we choose it. It is not a thing unavoidably imposed upon us; but it is a thing that a friendly mind prompts us to, to tell him all our hearts. We would have no design which should not be under his eye, and about which we would not communicate with him. This the faith that justifies will infer. I should have insisted a little in the next place upon this,

4. That it obliges to the strictest watchfulness against the insinuations of this world into our hearts; because the friendship of this world is enmity against God. I pray bear it away with you. I must in faithfulness warn you of it. If you consider it not, all friendly concern with God is at an end. To have the world follow you into your closets, and into family duties, and into the public solemnities of worship, and you still carry the world with you, a worldly heart, a worldly mind, and worldly desires—this is very dangerous; for, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? When it is said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness," it is added, "for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. xiii. 5. There are five negatives, never, never, never, never, never. What doth that imply? It implies thus much,—that if yet I will allow, and indulge and cherish in my soul a predominant worldly inclination, I care not for the divine presence in comparison of this world. It signifies, that the world is more to me than God and the divine presence, and the glory of it; and that I had rather he should forsake me, than I should forsake this world. A worldly inclination is for this a less tolerable and more unallowable thing, because it contributes nothing to a man's enjoying more of this world, for there is nothing to be done in the pursuit of any honest design in the world, but I may better do it in subordination to God, than in opposition. I may use my understanding as well, and take in God with me, and keep myself in the divine presence, and continue united and cleaving to him in heart and spirit. And, therefore, if a worldly mind do draw a soul off from God, this is to be worldly for worldliness sake; it profiteth a man nothing, it plucks him away from God to no purpose. Any thing that were lawful and honest and just, might as well have been done, designed, and enjoyed, notwithstanding my intercourse with God. Faith is

our victory over the world; that faith, therefore, which doth justify a man, and set all things right between God and him, it must needs fortify against worldly inclinations, and make this world despicably little, and render God always gloriously great in mine eyes.

SERMON XXXVI.*

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

THUS I have evinced the truth of the doctrine of this text, by shewing you at large what there is of friendliness in this matter on God's part, and what there is on their part whom he brings to believe. It is the use of all which remains to be insisted upon and recommended to you. Wherein I shall not be diffuse, having had occasion to insist very largely, by way of use, upon a subject which you know was very congenerous to this, and of great affinity to it. But very instructive inferences it very obviously affords us. As,

1. We may collect hence, That bad as this world is, God hath yet some portion in it, to wit, a people peculiar to himself. Here he hath some that do believe in him, that he counts righteous, that he calls and treats as his "friends." And these are great peculiarities. You may see it is not his design (though this world have been all in a dreadful apostasy from God) to quit his interest in it, or quite to abandon it, and lay aside all kind thoughts towards it. This, you may see, is remote from him. It is not his intention, that though all have been in transgression against him, yet that all shall be involved in one condemnation, and in one ruin. But he hath his portion, that he doth and will exempt out of the common ruin, that shall not lie under an everlasting doom and condemnation with the rest of the perishing world. Those that "shall not be condemned with the world," as the Scripture expression is, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He hath in this world some friends that he will treat and deal with as such, and these must not lie under everlasting condemnation. His friends are such as do believe him, and as

* Preached February 13, 1693-4.

believing in him are not condemned, as, John v. 24. And they "shall never come into condemnation," for they are "passed from death unto life." He justifies, he imputes righteousness to them, as is expressed here. And "Who is he that condemneth" when God justifies? Rom. viii. And see what triumphs are erected in that chapter to the grace of God. "Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?" No tribulation, no affliction, no principality; nothing that is present, nothing that is to come, shall ever separate them.

Methinks it is a comfortable, pleasant thought, that, taking a prospect of this world, beholding it so generally with a dark, dismal, and gloomy shadow of death; beholding it lying in wickedness, and under the power of him who is called the god of this world, that yet God should have a select and peculiar people in it. What a glorious design was this, the forming of a society out of such a world as this, as should be called the friends of God. It is pleasant, and it ought to seem a great thing to our thoughts, that it should be so. And sure it must put us upon reflection: Oh am I of that happy society, of that select society? Such a society God hath in this world, that is out of doubt; a society of men that he calls his friends, that bear his character. That (I say) is out of all doubt. Whether we be of that number or no?—it is pity that should be a doubt. And methinks it should not be very easy to our minds while it is so. While this is with us a doubtful case, and we cannot speak clearly to this question, Am I of that society justly called the friends of God? But,

2. We may further collect hence, that as God has such a peculiar people in this world, who do specially belong to him, so this people are distinguished from the rest of the world by some very peculiar excellencies. Here is not a distinction without a difference. But there is a mighty difference, not which he finds, but which he makes between man and man, that people that are peculiar to him, and the rest of the world. There are two differing excellencies by which they are distinguished in the text: Believing in God, and friendship towards him. For the matter is plain enough in itself, and you have heard it largely evinced, that this friendship cannot but be mutual; that they are not merely passive in this friendship, or the objects of it, but the subjects too. Here is this great distinguishing excellency to be found in these sort of men, that they are such as do believe in God. Abraham believed God; this is not

spoken of him as a single person, but as the father of the faithful, as we may have occasion to take notice, the Scripture speaks expressly, again and again. And this is one of the characters of this people, the society of God's friends: they are a society of believers. A very great excellency, in such a world as this.

Object. But some may say in their own minds, What is there in it that doth notify and signalize such a people, as if they were upon that account more excellent than their neighbours? Methinks this believing it is but a light and trivial matter, that that should be the dignification of such a peculiar people which shall be called God's own, select and severed from all the rest of the world. What a small matter does this believing seem to be.

Ans. Indeed it cannot but seem so, according to the notion that too generally prevails, concerning believing. With many it is but a notion, an airy thing, that hovers in their minds, but makes no impression, no more alters them than a puff of wind would do a stone wall. With many others it is not so much as a notion. What multitudes are there that will be called Christians, but have no notion at all in their minds, correspondent to that name! No notion of the things they profess to believe. Their minds are wrapt up in a total ignorance of all the things that are to be the peculiar and most special matters of their faith. I do not wonder (when we consider what is made of faith in so great a part of the Christian world) that that of Solifidian should go for so ignominious and reproachful a name. Men have made so very light and small a matter of faith, that it may very well go for a very diminishing character to be a Solifidian, to be only a believer. Indeed men have reduced the business of faith to so little a trifle, that I know no reason, as to them, why Solifidian and Nolifidian should not signify alone to be only a believer, and no believer at all. Men have diminished even to nothing, a thing which with the most hath no object, and with the rest too generally no power, no efficacy, no spirit, no life; and it had as good be nothing, as do nothing, make no change upon their hearts.

But if it were considered what faith (the faith of the Gospel, which God calls faith, and upon which God calls believers his friends)—If (I say) it be considered what it hath in it, and what goes along with it, what it carries in it, and what it carries with it, it will appear a mighty thing, a glorious thing, and such as that one would not wonder

that such a select peculiar people of God should be distinguished by it; that it should be the differencing thing, one of the main differences from the rest of the world. For it is such a thing as plucks a man quite off from all this world. Men are all engulphed naturally in the spirit of this world. This faith severs them, raises them quite into another sphere, into an invisible world; and it is to them (wherever it is) the substance of the things that they hope for, and the evidence of the things which they see not. It plucks men quite off from themselves. It is a self-emptying thing. Divides and severs a man from himself. It is that by which he ceaseth to trust in himself, to depend upon himself, to have any confidence in himself, and so come to think the most debasingly of himself, yea the most terribly. So that he not only despises, but he dreads himself, and flies from himself, and out of himself. And then it unites him with God and with Christ, by whom only he can take hold of God. Through Christ we believe in God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Faith passeth through Christ unto God, as the Spirit speaks, 1 Pet. i. 21. and John xiv. 1. It is that, therefore, whereby the soul seizes and possesses (according to its capacity) the all-comprehending good communicable, and communicated in and by Christ. That is, Christ dwells in the heart by this faith. And thereupon souls being rooted and grounded in love, are filled with all the fulness of God. If you think but of what is carried with it (the many things that were formerly instanced in) they make this faith appear to be a most glorious thing in the soul wherever it hath place. It is that by which a person commits himself, intrusts himself, wholly and entirely into the hands of another. That by which it trusts one that it never saw, even with the very soul, and all its concernments. It is a venture for eternity upon this apprehension and knowledge, that if there be error or mistake in the case, it is never to be corrected, a matter never to be altered. It is a trusting with one's soul one whom we know we have offended; one of the most difficult and arduous things in the world, when we know we have displeased him, yet to trust him and cast all our care upon him; yea, upon one that doth afflict us, doth things very ungrateful to us, and who we know will at last bring us down into the very dust of death. And yet the soul saith, Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him. It is such a thing as governs the whole life of them that have it; for the just do live by it. As others live by their senses, those

live by their faith upon an invisible God, an invisible Christ, and an invisible world. We know not what belongs to believing, if we understand nothing of all this; and then this faith is a riddle. It is not to be wondered at that this should be one of the peculiar and characteristical excellencies of that people whom God doth sever and make peculiar to himself from the rest of men. And their friendliness to God is another of those excellencies. And by how much the fewer his friends are, so much the nobler and more glorious a thing is it to be one of them. To bear a friendly mind towards God in a world where he is invisible, almost forgotten, and where so few regard him, look after, or concern themselves with him, this is a very peculiar excellency. That when the generality of men have their minds and hearts, their thoughts and affections, wholly engaged and taken up about things of sense, there appears so much the more of a nobler temper and spirit in these men: No, I must have somewhat else for the object of my friendly love, the love of my delight, (which is friendly love) I must have somewhat else to delight in, and wherein to solace and finally to satisfy myself. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth besides thee,?" Ps. lxxiii. 25. That people that do peculiarly belong to God are distinguished from the rest of the world by very peculiar excellencies.

3. We may further learn hence, that a justified state, and a state of friendship with God, are commensurate, or do measure one another. They are of equal extent; God hath no friends but whom he justifies. And he justifies none but who are his friends. That is, he doth actually account, or actually render them righteous by imputing righteousness to them who are brought into actual friendship with him. To wit, he is then statedly in friendship with them, when there is a friendship in-wrought, even in the same instant, in their hearts towards him. It is very true, indeed, we have such an expression as that of justifying "the ungodly," Rom. v. 6. So you have abundance of expressions in Scripture which must be understood just as that must. That the blind do see, the deaf do hear, and the lame do walk, and the like. That is, they who immediately before were such, are now made capable of all these acts which do bespeak another state. An ungodly man is justified; we are told in the same context that he is justified by faith: faith is not the act of an ungodly man continuing so; but as the blind are said to see, that is, sight being given to

them when they were immediately before blind. And the lame to walk, to wit, who were immediately before lame, but now are made to walk. So an ungodly person is justified; one that was immediately before ungodly. But in the same instant when God imputes righteousness to him, he gives light, a new spirit, a new nature to him; for he justifies him as a believer. The word rendered "ungodly" there signifies an unworking man: but faith is the highest act of worship that the human soul is capable of. For therein I actually acknowledge and adore the truth, and wisdom, and power, and goodness of that God unto whom I intrust myself. There is no higher worship than that which is carried in faith. And therefore, that such an one should be at the same time a believer and an unworshipping person, is to say and unsay the same thing with and the same breath, and even in the same words. Therefore understand the matter so, that a justified state is a state of friendship with God: which includes a friendly disposition introduced in the same instant, in-wrought into our souls, towards God. That faith being in-wrought which would take in love, which virtually comprehends love in it, so that it doth not do its first and most essential act without the ingrediency of it; to wit, unite the soul with God in Christ. When the soul comes into that union with God in Christ, that is its conversion and union at the same time. Doth it unite with him, and retain an aversion at the same time? That is impossible. But that aversion is turned into propension, and that propension is only faith working by love. "The grace of God was exceeding abundant towards me (saith the Apostle, 1 Tim. i. 14.) with faith," &c. He being the fountain of all grace, and the object too of these graces. If any dream, therefore, of being in a justified state, while as yet they retain an habitual fixed aversion from God, and bear no friendly mind towards him, this is a very idle dream, a very delusive dream, a dream which, if a man awake not out of it betimes, will prove a delusion unto his ruin and destruction. It is a misrepresenting of the Christian religion throughout, to suppose that it should be only a provision made to change the states of men, without changing their hearts; to bring men into a justified estate, and yet to leave them in a state of enmity to God, and disaffection towards him, that they care not to come at him to know him, to converse with him.

This is the notion that hath so vastly spread through the Christian world. Men think that they are justified by

Christ's dying, and that they need not care, nor concern themselves, whether there be any change made in them, yea or no. But as I told you formerly upon this subject, Christ's righteousness is never the clothing of a carcase continuing so. But when he doth clothe and invest any with his righteousness, he doth put a spirit of life into them at the same time, and that spirit of life breathes in a friendly love. Men are generally justified under the Gospel upon the same terms and in the same way wherein the great father of believers was, to wit, upon their believing God. He hereupon immediately counts them righteous, but at the same time inspiring them with that friendly love towards him which as a new vital principle habituates them and facilitates them unto all the duties and actions of that holy devoted life, that life of friendliness towards God wherein they are to spend the residue of their days.

In his first treatment with Abraham, he propounds himself to him as God all-sufficient, and at the same time draws his heart to close with him, and puts into him such a disposition with it to walk with him, and be perfect. I am God, all-sufficient, "walk before me, and be thou perfect," or upright, Gen. xvii. 1. He doth not vary his method: this is his way of treatment with all others. As he dealt with the father of believers, so he hath with all believers besides. If once they are willing to abandon and quit all things else to which their sense had addicted and inclined their hearts, so as they now resolve on and close with the great objects of faith, they pass into that sphere that is composed and made up of invisible objects, such as faith hath to do with, and principally himself as he is in Christ: hereupon he imputes righteousness to them, that faith carrying in it that propension and inclination of heart to him, whereby they are made his friends, and inclined to all friendly deportment towards him afterwards. Therefore, take we heed lest any impose upon themselves with an imagination that they shall be justified, saved from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life, by only an external righteousness imputed to them without the concomitancy of a friendly disposition of heart in-wrought in them towards God through Christ. And again,—

4. We may further collect hence, that by this measure a great many have very great cause to doubt and to dread their state; to have not only doubtful, but very dreadful thoughts concerning their state: for how plain a thing is it,

that as God hath some friends in this world, so plain a thing is it, that he hath but few friends in this world. And then if friendship towards God and a justified state do measure one another, and are commensurate, there is too much cause for multitudes, not only to have doubtful, but very dreadful thoughts about the state of their case. They are to make their estimate by two such things as are most eminent and obvious to any one's thoughts in friendship; that is, converse with my friend, and service to my friend: if these two things are to be the measure by which we are to make an estimate, how few friends has the blessed God in this world.

(1.) How few that care for his converse. Is not this the common account given of the temper and genius of the sons of men, and of their state together, Eph. ii. 12. "without God in the world." Let every one consult his own heart, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider;—Is not this still my case, to be without God in the world from day to day? Do not I transact my affairs without God? Do not I begin my days and end them one after another as they pass, without God? or, if I have any thing to do with him, is it as a friend? If I have any thoughts of him, are they friendly thoughts, pleasant, complacential, and reverential ones? for I can only have such if I have those that are due towards such a friend; adoring thoughts, that are thereupon grateful and pleasant as they are full of duty towards him. Do I love his presence, delight in approaching to him? Can I please myself to shut myself up in a corner, in a closet with him, to pour out my soul to him, and to receive his communications to me? How little of this is there among us! And then,—

(2.) If we consider the other thing mentioned, most eminent and obvious in friendship, service to one's friend. All that I can do is too little for my friend; his interest is my interest. He with whom I am entire in friendship, I cannot have a separate interest from. I cannot serve an interest of mine own with the neglect, much less with the disservice, of the interest of my friend. What expression is there among us of a friendly mind towards God in this kind! as the apostle speaks concerning Christ (and we cannot consider him but we must consider God in him)—"For me to live is Christ," Philip. i. 21. I have no business to live in this world but for God; I have devoted myself to him, from a principle of friendly love. This world is nothing to me, but for him; I would not covet to live in it, but upon his account, that I may know him more and serve him better,

and be more conformed to him, and fitted to dwell with him for ever. Therefore serving of his interest is your business, your life is a living to God. The whole stream of all the designs and of all the actions of your life running directly towards God, that you may live to God; which doth comprehend the whole business of life; Gal. ii. 19. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." All my life is to run into him, to terminate in him; so it cannot but be, where there is a friendly mind towards him. These are trying things, and they lie in a very little compass, so that we do not need to go far if we make our judgment or estimate by the measure that hath been mentioned, what things they are that do distinguish the peculiar people of God from other men; certainly this will bring the matter to a very narrow and short issue. We say, none are in a justified state but God's friends; that friendship to God cannot be an empty name; it must signify nothing if it doth not signify these two great things, to wit, a desire of his converse, and an inclination of mind to do him all the service that we are capable of doing him, from the dictate and instinct of friendly love. I cannot be kept from him, because he is my friend. I must do for him all I can, because he is my friend. Upon all this you may also gather, what in the close and conclusion of so copious a discourse I am by way of exhortation to recommend to you, to wit, these two great things contained in the text, Faith in God, and Friendship with him.

SERMON XXXVII*.

JAMES II. 23.

And the scripture was fulfilled, &c.

I TOLD you the last time, that I intended to put a period to the long discourse on this subject at this time. And herein, by way of summary, I have these two great things contained in the text, seriously to recommend unto you,—faith in God, and friendship with him. I cannot suppose that, foreknowing the subject, so many should come together

* Preached Feb. 25, 1693-4.

without a design, that if any thing should be said applicable to so great and high purposes, they will lay it up in order to future use and benefit. It would be a hard supposition, and have too much of uncharitableness in it, for me to give any place in my thoughts that you should be generally come together without any such design; I hope there are none come with so vain and wanton a mind, as only to throw away an hour here that they know not what else to do with; or to gaze at one another, or to criticise, or spend their judgment upon what they hear, without any more ado, and to go as they came.

If any two things should be pitched upon in any of our thoughts, of greater importance than other, what can you think of greater than these two which you find comprehended together in this text—faith in God, and friendship with him. It cannot be, if we have any design for eternity and another world, that we can look upon these things with neglect. Nothing can be of greater concernment; even to the judgment of your own consciences, they must appear so as they really and truly are: and, methinks, we should be all within ourselves about it. Do we think it can go well hereafter with unbelievers, or with God's enemies? In reference to each of these, somewhat in the conclusion of this discourse is to be said, by way of direction and exhortation.—

1. As to the former, faith in God. You are not to understand this (though it be believing in God that the text speaks of) exclusive of Christ, but as including him; that is, implying and supposing him to be the mediate object of your faith, while God is pointed at as the final and ultimate object: according to the apostle, I Pet. i. 21, "Who through him (meaning Christ) do believe in God." Those that are believers in a gospel sense, who through Christ do believe in God, their faith being carried through Christ as the mediator and the mediate object, unto God as the terminative and ultimate object. It was this believing in God through Christ the promised seed, that Abraham the great father of believers is characterized by in this text, and in divers other places of scripture. And such a faith as his was you are to endeavour that you may find alive and in exercise in each of your souls. For it is not a dead faith that will pass for faith in the divine estimate, as this chapter more expressly and largely discourses. With what contempt doth it speak of a dead faith, making it but a carcase. "As the body without the spirit is dead," so is that faith that is not work-

ing, that is not energetical, that hath no energy, no life with it. So, you know, the chapter closes.

With some, I told you, it is but a notion. I fear with many besides (it may be many more) it may be less than that. Men call themselves believers when they have not such a notion in their minds of the things that they pretend to believe. With some a notional faith serves their turn; with others what is less, a mere nominal faith. It will do us no good to have that in us which we call faith, unless God calls it so too. And know, therefore, that those who have not that faith which in the evangelical sense, and by that test, will go for such, they must go among the unbelievers, let them call themselves, or let other men call them, what they will. And then for excitation in this matter, let me but offer these two awakening things to be considered.

1. That considering a man to be found an unbeliever under the gospel, which claims and challenges his faith, that is, which claims to be believed by a correspondent faith unto what it contains and carries in it; he hath the guilt of all his other sins still continuing, and bound down close upon him. An unbelieving person is an unjustified person. So such must understand the state of the case. I have all the weight of that guilt upon me, which I have been contracting all my days. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." Righteousness is not imputed upon other terms. Will any man think to make for himself a new gospel, to confront that gospel which our Lord hath sent among us? An unbeliever, and unjustified. So represent the case to yourselves. And what doth that signify? It signifies, that the holy jealous God holds me guilty of all that I have been doing against him all my days. I have lived long as "without God in the world," and he holds me guilty. I have lived to myself, and not to him, and he holds me guilty. Neglected him, disobeyed him, and lived in affront to him, and he holds me guilty. Every thing that I have used and enjoyed in this world, it hath been by usurpation; it hath been without right, as to him, without allowance. I ought to have eaten and drank, and looked up, acknowledging and adoring him whose fulness filleth all in all; but God was not in all my thoughts: and for all this he holds me guilty. I have lived a prayerless life, an ungodly life, alienated from the life of God; this hath been my way and course, and he holds me guilty. What an amazing thing is this! As long as an unbeliever, still under guilt. You have no righteousness to shelter you,

to protect you, to keep off wrath and vengeance from you. But,

2. That is not all, you have a superadded (and that the greatest) load of guilt imaginable, by not believing. "He that believeth not, is condemned already," &c. That is, he to whom there is a sufficient proposal made; the object is not concealed, nor wrapt up in darkness, but set in clear and open light before your eyes, and yet you believe not. Upon how fearful terms doth such an one perish. When his case comes to be stated at the last, in the judgment of the great day, Why is such an one cast? Why is he held guilty? Why is he abandoned to perish? Why is it said to him, "Depart, accursed?" It is because he would not believe in God. He had many other sins upon him, but they would all have been forgiven him if he would have believed, if he would have taken God and his Son; then would have been a perfect peace between God and him. If his sins had been never so great, they had been all done away. But this man perisheth, because he would not believe him against sensual imaginations—against carnal inclinations. God told him it was best for him to abandon his sins, and put himself under his government, and live by his rules and holy laws; but he would not believe this, but thought it better to obey the lusts of his own heart, and walk according to his own imagination. He perisheth, because he would not believe God; because he made him a liar in that plain testimony and record he had given, concerning the way of salvation unto sinners by his Son. Against whom did "he swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, but them that believed not? So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief." This was the great provoking wickedness of that people all along. How long will ye provoke me? How long will ye not believe me, notwithstanding the mighty noble works that have been done in the midst of you. God was manifesting himself in several and many great and remarkable instances; but yet they would not believe. They despised the pleasant land;—they believed not his word. All their wickedness was rooted in infidelity—they could not take the word of God. How fearful a case is this? When a reasonable creature, one that hath an intelligent mind and spirit about him, part of the offspring of the great Father of spirits, he would not be governed by the divine dictates, but opposed the inclination and imagination of his flesh, unto the express word of the Father of spirits. He tells me, I must

live so and so, that I may do well—that I may die happy, and live eternally. But I will not believe it. I will believe the lusts of my own heart; rather run the hazard—venture it—try what will come of it. Oh! to perish on these terms is dreadful perishing, because I give the lie to Him that gave me breath.

But then I must say somewhat too, by way of direction in this important matter. Is it so fearful a thing not to believe? Will not any thing that may carry with it the shadow of believing, serve the turn? But it must be faith indeed, and such as will answer the intendment of the gospel; that I must have, or I perish as an unbeliever, whatsoever character I have gone under, or have thought myself to have. Why, how shall I do or know? Pray direct me in this, what kind of faith I must aim at, and not satisfy myself short of, or to be without? Why it must be,

1. Such (and pray, therefore, aim at such) a faith as shall admit the gospel revelation into your hearts. This is not so obscure a thing as many, upon the first hearing, may account it. Do not you know the difference between receiving a report by your ears only, and taking it into the heart? Suppose it were of some very great good news which you hear of in any uncertain way, so as that you apprehend no reason to believe it true? It enters your ears, but goes no farther. But if it be a great thing, and it comes with certainty, so as that no room of rational doubt remains concerning the truth of the matter; then it goes into your heart, and fills that with joy and pleasure and complacency. You sensibly find it exciting and raising an affection in you suitable to the import of the thing, if the gospel be received, so that reception makes its own distinction visibly in it. "I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." When the gospel comes among you, and tells you that the great Majesty of heaven, whom you have offended, is willing to be reconciled to you, and hath sent his Son into the world on purpose to be the reconciler, and he died upon the cross a reconciling sacrifice; it is discernible (if you will inspect and look into yourselves,) whether that which you call faith in you, of the gospel and the gospel revelation, make any such impressions upon your heart as is correspondent of so great a thing. It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." That is the great business of enquiry. What kind of faith will serve me unto righteousness, that I may be justified—that I may be counted righteous there-

upon? Why it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10. And saith the apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. i. 15.

Have you received the gospel revelation so, as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation?" Is it acceptable, do you judge it worthy of your acceptation, of all acceptation? Then your heart and soul embraceth it, and closeth with it. Thus the apostle speaks in that great summary of the gospel, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (even the chief of them;) of whom I am chief."

2. Labour for such a faith as may inwardly unite your souls to Christ, revealed in this gospel, and with God in him. Your faith is to take hold of him, and of God in him, so as thereby to come into an united state, a state of union with him, that you may thereupon be in him. It must be such a faith as whereby Christ may dwell in your hearts. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Eph. iii. 17. That is not spoken exclusively of God, for it is presently subjoined, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." All which fulness is in him. Do not satisfy yourselves without such a faith as that by which you may say you have now the Son of God. God in him, in you, and with you. He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true. That understanding, to know him that is true, is faith, as it resides in the mind. But though it hath its first seat there, it doth not terminate there, for this immediately ensues, and we are in him. In whom? In Jesus Christ the Son, who is the true God, and eternal life. We pass into union by this intuition, even into union with the true God, who carries eternal life in his very name. Such a faith as leaves you still at a distance from God and from Christ, do you think that can avail you? All that is in Christ is yours, as you come to be in him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. In Him once, and all is yours; whatsoever you need, whatsoever is suitable to the exigency of your state. Are you foolish creatures, He is wisdom to you. Are you guilty creatures, he is righteousness to you. Are you impure creatures, He is sanctification to you. Are you enslaved lost creatures, He is redemption to you, if you be in him; but nothing at all if you be not in him.

3. Labour for such a faith as may be transforming to

your whole souls. Consider that the whole economy of the gospel aims at this, the bringing of all, upon whom it shall have its effect, into the unity of the faith, so that all come to unite in one faith. Eph. iv. 13. And what is to be consequent thereupon, the apostle tells you in what follows there, supposing this once to be done, and that you are brought with the rest of sincere believers into the oneness of faith, the unity of the faith which is common to serious and sincere Christians. As such then, I testify to you, that you are not to walk like other Gentiles, as if this faith, in which all sincere Christians were to unite and be one, should leave you, but just like other men in your habitual frame. "I say it, and I testify to you in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." Eph. iv. 17. You had an heart alienated from that life. Will you keep that heart still, and call yourself a believer, and pretend to be come to unity of the faith? Still to live with an habitual disinclination in your heart towards God? This can never be. But if you have learned "the truth as it is in Jesus," I tell you (saith the Apostle) what that must be: it must come to this, the "putting off of the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts," and "being renewed in the spirit of your mind." Ephes. iv. 22, 23. You are never come into the unity of that faith which belongs to all that shall be saved, till there be thereupon a divestiture and total investiture. A divestiture and "putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceivable lusts;" you must cease to be the man that you were before, and (as that which is intervening and central in the case) there must be a renovation even in the spirit of your minds, a new heart and a right spirit being created and renewed in you, being renewed in the spirit of your minds, the inward seat of vital governing principles. If the spirit of the mind be renewed, that spreads influence through the man, then there is a new man put on. Not some slight, superficial change in this or that particular respect, but an entire new man. As he that is in Christ is said to be a new creature. There is a new creation introduced, the man is new. This must be, if your faith be to any purpose. The apostle blesses God for the Thessalonians, in that he could look upon them, as those that were chosen to salvation by the remarkable and observable effects. The way that God had taken with them was, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; such a believing of the truth as had been accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit. Agreeably

to that of our Lord himself, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John xvii. 17.

4. See that it be such a faith as doth and shall govern your lives, so that you live by it, and thereupon cannot only say, I did believe seven or ten or twenty years ago, but I continually live by my believing. A man is not said to live by that which rarely happens to him, or once or twice in a lifetime. We are to live by breathing, but we cannot do so if it be not continual. So we are to live by believing; "the just shall live by his faith." That he is continually to live by all his days. Can it be thought that such an one shall be said to live now, because he drew breath twenty years ago? But that belief which is true, real, vital, will be continually repeating its acts and exercises. "The life that I live in the flesh (says the Apostle,) I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. That is, if your faith be a right vital principle, and such as the gospel means and signifies by the name of faith, it is such a thing as carries up the soul into a continual course, into an invisible scene of things. There you have an invisible God, and an invisible Christ, and an invisible glory, still in view. There are some that talk of such a thing as a double sight, or a second sight, so as that they who have it have a visible world and an invisible world in view at once. I know no second sight like that of faith. That, indeed, will present an invisible world, and keep it in view before you, so that by it you will be more conversant in the world of spirits, with the Father of spirits, and with spiritual and invisible things; more conversant in your hearts, more with delight, more with savour and relish, than in this shadowy scene of things which you have within the view and under the notice of your sense. You will look upon this world "as that the fashion thereof passeth away;" but by your faith (which is to you "the substance of things hoped for," &c.) you will live above, you will live with God, you will live with Christ, you will live as on the brink and borders of eternity, ready to enter in, only waiting for a dismission hence—a call and translation thither. This is living by faith.

For, the apostle having told us, Heb. x. 38, that "the just shall live by faith," (repeating the ancient maxim out of the Old Testament, to signify to us that that is not the way of living for the saints at one time or age of the church of God only; but it is from age to age, through all the successions of time, this must be the way of believing.)

then he tells us in the beginning of the next chapter, what that faith is by which such a man must live; to wit, "The substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen." Such a faith as represents God and Christ, and heaven, and the invisible things, all as great and most substantial realities; clothed with a clear light, and so set and continued in view before your eyes. This is, that we are to live, not to have such representations now and then, but to have them statedly before us, and so to live and direct our course accordingly. But,

2. I am also to recommend to you this other great thing, friendship with God. And in reference to that, I would also say somewhat both by way of excitation and direction. I can speak but briefly to many things. For excitation consider,

1. Is it not your great privilege to live here in this world in a state of friendship with God? for what more exalted privilege is there to poor creatures living in mortal flesh? Here I live in flesh, dwell in flesh; but it is in friendship with God. In low circumstances, amidst a great many troubles and difficulties, but in friendship with God. Who would not choose this way of living, when it is represented to our option, when it is propounded to us as matter of choice?

2. Consider there is no middle state (for you to whom this overture is made) between these two, a state of friendship with God, and a state of enmity to him; you must be either his friends or his enemies. There can be no neutrality in this case; and will it not make a man's heart sink within him to think of this? I must either live God's friend or God's enemy. Dare I venture when the matter is laid before me as a matter of deliberation, to say, I will live the latter, I will live his enemy? You that were alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works; you see how the case is stated: you must still be enemies in your minds, through wicked works, till you are reconciled and become friends. There is no neutral state, you must go from day to day, up and down in this world, either as God's friends, or his enemies.

3. Consider that this friendship with God which we recommend to you, and into which the gospel continually calls you, is no impossible, no impracticable thing, for it is prescribed to us as matter of duty: "Every man as he is called, let him therein abide with God." 1 Cor. vii. 24. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" John iv. 20.

which speaks this living in the love of God to be therefore more difficult, because we see him not. But the strength of the argument goes upon that supposition, that it is a thing which cannot be dispensed with, notwithstanding the difficulty: and be it as difficult as it will, it must therefore be supposed not to be impossible to live in the love of God, and in a state of friendship with him, though he be invisible. "How shall he love God?" implying that it is a thing, the thought whereof is to be abhorred, that a man should think of living in this world, and not to live in actual commerce and intercourse, to be kept up, and continued, with God in love. How shall he do it? It implies, that he must do it, and therefore the thing is by no means to be looked upon as impossible. And to pretend that it is impossible, is to pretend that we have gone below our own kind, that we have lost human nature, which, if it remain with us still, though we have flesh about us, yet our nobler part is spirit. And, what is it an impossible thing for a mind, a spirit, to converse with the great Father of spirits? Is flesh more akin to us than spirit, that supreme Spirit, that universal Spirit, that Spirit that diffuses influences every where throughout the world? Are we more akin to flesh, and fleshly things, than we are to this Spirit, whose offspring we are, and who is our Father? Therefore, it is not to be thought or looked on as an impossible or impracticable thing to come into and continue in this state of friendship with God. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for his mercy in Christ Jesus, unto life eternal." Jude 21. What is matter of express precept, is not to be looked upon simply and absolutely impossible by a natural impossibility. It is only so by a moral impotency, against which the aids of grace are to be expected and sought. And,

4. Consider that this friendship with God, as it is not an impossible or impracticable thing, so it is to be maintained in the easiest and most unexceptionable way. Consider, that to enter into this state is but to obey the divine call, the very meaning and import of the whole gospel of reconcilation. We have the greatest assurances in all the world, that God is not difficult or hard of acquaintance; for he invites. Will he refuse whom he invites? The gospel is sent to us to beseech us, in Christ's name and stead, to be reconciled unto God. Will he refuse that which he seeks? decline that friendship into which he calls us? He is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin might not be imputed," or (which is the same thing) that righteousness

might be imputed." 2 Cor. v. 19. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are commissioned, and sent, and do in Christ's stead beseech you to be reconciled unto God. You may conclude, with the greatest assurance imaginable, that God is willing, and not difficult, as to entering into this state of friendship with us. And then there is as little supposable difficulty of continuing in it; for do but consider to that purpose these two things, 1. That he is never far off: and 2. That he is easy to forgive.

1. That he is never far off, you will say; how shall I keep friendship with God? He is in heaven, I am upon earth. In heaven, yes, as to his more glorious manifestation of himself. But he is not far from any of us, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." And this is told us, that we may seek and find him out, insomuch as he is far from none of us. So that now you may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. How easy is the way to keep up this friendship: only to be now and then at the expense of a thought. Where is God my Maker? that will not cost you dear. You have no cause to say, What shall I do for my friend? Who shall go up to heaven to fetch him me down from thence, or who shall go to the uttermost ends of the earth to fetch him me up from thence. No, he is with you; turn you but to him, and you will find him with you. Do but direct your mind, turn your thoughts inward, and you will find him with you. Indeed he often passes by, and we perceive him not. "Thou dost compass me behind and before, (saith the Psalmist) and art acquainted with all my ways." O how unaccountable is it to keep off ourselves, unacquainted with him and his ways! And,

2. He is easy to forgive. Ay, but breaches may happen. I forget and neglect him too often, and am ashamed and confounded in my own sense; I am afraid to look towards him any more. That must not by any means be. You must return, though it be with weeping and humiliation. And if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if it be not done triflingly, if it be not done without sense, if it be not done with an inclination and resolution to persist and go on in sin still. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Ps. xxxii. 5. The

injustice of it. And then it is added, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." Ps. xxxii. 6. Who would decline such a friendship with him who is so easy to be reconciled at first, and still willing to forgive where there is not a wilful perseverance in obstinate rebellion against his rightful authority, and his abundant love and goodness? And consider,

5. It is the way to bring your minds to ease in reference to all your more private concernments. You have difficulties in the world, you have troubles and straits, and know not which way to turn yourselves. Oh what a great thing is it to have such a friend, who invites you to cast your care upon him, for he will care for you. And then the peace of God shall hereupon keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

6. It will keep you quiet in reference to public concernments. This is a very pitiable case, that when they see things run counter to their expectations, their aims, their designs and inclinations, they are full of anxiety, full of concern, full of dread and fear. They know not what will become of things. Oh what an heart-quieting thought is it, that all is in the hands of your friend, your great and wise friend, who doeth as pleaseth him in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. And he will never manage things so as that his true friends shall at last have any cause to complain. And then consider,

7. That all will be well for ever when you are caught up in the clouds to meet your Redeemer in the air, and to be for ever with the Lord. That being his declared pleasure, that he will have all his friends together eternally with him in one society, in one assembly, made up of an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. That they that have lived by the faith of Abraham, and been friends of God, as he was, may sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in his kingdom, and there reside for ever. In this scripture we are told that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

But some may say, What is that to me, who live in the world so many ages after? Why the Scriptures, as if it were on purpose to obviate any such thoughts, tell us (particularly the Apostle, Rom. iv. latter end) where he had been speaking of the same thing, Abraham believing God, and its being imputed to him for righteousness, it was not for

his sake that this was written, not for his sake alone, but for all that should believe with the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, i. e. as believing under the common notion of believers. Not as if our faith were to be produced, or to be maintained, by any influences from him. But he is called the father of believers upon the same account upon which any one great and eminent in a profession is said to be the father of such, to wit, a great example, as Jabal is said to be the father of them that dwell in tents, and Jubal the father of them that handle the harp and organ. What was said concerning Abraham and his faith, and his friendship with God, thereupon, was not written for him alone, but for us too, that we are to live in the same faith and the same friendship with God as he did.

I shall shut up all, by way of direction as to this, with only two words in general. You think it a very desirable thing (I doubt not but you do) to be in this state of friendship with God. Surely every one among us must say, if it be a desirable thing to live in a state of friendship with God, who would not live at this rate every day in a state of friendship with the great and glorious God of heaven and earth! I shall only say these two things by way of direction in reference hereto.

1. Give yourselves up entirely unto this friendship with God; and do it with solemnity: so great a thing as this, entering into friendship with God, the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the matter speaks itself that it ought to be done with solemnity. Make a solemn business of it: apply yourselves purposely to him, and tell him, Lord I have heard thy mind, thy pleasure, thou wouldst have souls that have wandered from thee, and been alienated, come into thine acquaintance and friendship. The gospel under which I live hath told me so; I believe thy word; I come now to offer myself up unto thee, to be thy reconciled one, thy devoted one, thy servant, thy friend. "Thy servant, thy servant; O Lord, thou hast broken my bonds." Ps. cxvi. 16. But our Saviour would have us know, that the notion of a servant is not to exclude that of a friend, as that of a friend is not to exclude the notion of a servant, but only to prevail and predominate in the state. The notion of friendship is in the Christian state to be predominate, and to be the principal thing. Tender yourself to God accordingly. We hear many discourses to this purpose: but with too many the matter comes all to nothing, because we never make a solemn business of it. The entrance into such

a state, so sacred a state, if it were done with solemnity, there would stand a remark upon it, I have engaged myself in a state of friendship with God, I must live pursuantly hereunto. I hope you will think of this: such as come to learn how you might live in a state of friendship with God. Such as have any such design, I hope will think of this another time; i. e. that when this state of friendship with God is once entered into, we must give ourselves up to it. And then,

2. Mind, it is a continued course: otherwise, you trifled at first; never meant sincerely, never meant as you did pretend. Mind, I say, it is a continued course; and through your whole course. These are but generals; I have mentioned many particulars, at former times, to this purpose; that, if you recollect yourselves, would be of stated use to you. But all will come under this general; mind this often, that there is a friendship settled between God and me; I must in all things hereupon demean myself towards him as a friend: that is, I must consult him in all, resign all things to him, cross him in nothing; for friendship between him and us carries a peculiarity in it. If there were an equality between him and me, then it were something as between human friends, it may be. They may be equally wise, they may be equally great or equally mean; equally able to do for one another. But this is not the case here; this is not like common friends, as I formerly shewed at large; and, therefore, there must be a constant reference to him in all things. We are in all things to yield to him, to cross him in nothing. And so, when in all things we are to consult him, we are to take his counsel in all, and to stand in his counsel. Not to be self-willed, not to say, we will walk in the way of our own hearts, whatsoever becomes of our friendship with him. You must always be true to him; you must always believe him true to you. You must never be strange to him; always be free, unreserved, open-hearted. You must willingly agree to it, that he be privy to all your affairs. He will be so, whether you will or no, but it is that to which your hearts should consent, and in which your hearts should rejoice, so as to be able to say, Lord! I know I can hide nothing from thee, and I would not if I could; I desire all things may lay open between me and thee, that there may be nothing hid, no veil drawn between thee and my soul. Search me, try me, look into me. It is the pleasure and advantage of this friendship, to know that he can behold sincerity, and accept it, and reward it, and delight in it. And, therefore, you must re-

solve never to break off this friendship, but look upon him as your inseparable friend, and from whom you are never to depart. And say to yourself, this God shall be your God; i. e. your friend, your friendly ruler, for ever and ever, and shall be your guide even unto death. So that you can never any moment of your life suffer an elongation from him, that he should be far off, or keep long from you, but presently your hearts will miss him. And you will say, Oh! where is my friend? I will seek him, pursue after him, as the spouse in the Canticles is represented to pursue after him whom her soul loved. This is my friend, where is he? where is he? You will be presently upon enquiries, if he have hid himself, and seem to have withdrawn and retired from you; for this hath been the state of things between him and you in contracting this state of friendship, that this God shall be your God for ever and ever, and your guide even unto death.

SERMON XXXVIII.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

THE subject that I last finished, you find did connect faith and friendship with God. This connects faith and sonship to God. And the one and the other must be understood (by them that will consider) to be of the greatest importance to us imaginable; so great, that it is to be hoped the former is not forgotten, and this latter will not slightingly and negligently be attended to.

The words in themselves are an express doctrinal assertion, which I shall not need therefore to vary into other terms; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." It needs only to be explained and applied: for the explication of it, that you cannot upon the first hearing of such an assertion as this, but think very necessary. For it may seem strange to unaccustomed ears, at least, that such a thing as this should be affirmed so generally, concerning believing Jesus to be the Christ, that every such

* Preached May 11th, 1693.

an one should be said to be born of God. How amazing a sound may this carry with it to many who do less consider, or who understand less what the meaning of these terms is, to "believe Jesus to be the Christ," and to "be born of God;" the latter of these doth indeed, at the very first hearing, appear a very great thing—be born of God! It might even swallow up a man's soul to think of such a thing as this, affirmed of such worms as we are. We, that might "say to the worm, Thou art our father, and to corruption, Thou art our sister and mother;" to speak of such creatures as we, as of a divine offspring and heavenly progeny, as of persons born of God; how wonderful and transporting may it be to us.

But that only which can make such an assertion as this seem strange is, that while this is apprehended (as it is to be really and truly) a very great thing; for the most part, such believing is reckoned a very little thing. It may, indeed, seem a great thing to be a son of God, one born of God; but the name of believing is become so cheap amongst us, and carries so little and so diminished a sound with it, that we are too generally tempted to look upon it as a slight, and small, and trivial matter. But when these terms come to be opened and understood, it will be found that there is such a near affinity between these two things, being "born of God," and "believing that Jesus is the Christ;" that the one will be easily understood not to have any place at all where the other hath no place; that they can never be apart, but wheresoever the one is the other must be too.

Our business therefore in the explication must be to do these two things; first, to consider the parts of this assertion; and then, secondly, to shew their necessary connexion with one another.

1. We are to open the parts of this assertion severally, which you see are these two, concerning Christ and a divine birth; "believing that Jesus is the Christ," and being "born of God." And,

1. For the former of these, what the import is of "believing that Jesus is the Christ." And as touching that, there are again, more particularly, two things to be stated. First, the thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ; and, secondly, the believing of this.

(1.) The thing to be believed, that Jesus is the Christ. I pray you attend to it. Much of the greatness of this thing, which is our present subject, to wit, faith concerning him, depends upon a right understanding what it is that must be the object of this faith, and which is stated as the object of

it here. The thing to be believed is, that Jesus is the Christ. It concerns us greatly to understand this aright. It is not a trivial matter that is here represented to us as the object of our faith, or the thing we are to believe. And that we may more distinctly apprehend it, we are yet to go lower, and to consider, first, the subject of this affirmation unto which we are to yield our assent, and give up our faith, which is represented to us only under one single term, Jesus; and then, secondly, what we are to believe of this subject, that he is the Christ.

[1.] The very subject itself must be truly stated; we must in our own thoughts determine of the person here spoken of, and concerning whom this affirmation is pronounced, otherwise we do nothing. Why, who is this Jesus of whom we are to believe that he is the Christ? Take we heed that our thoughts do not wander here; for that would be fatal if they should, if they should wander to another subject. This, which is so peculiarly said concerning him, must be understood exclusively of any one else; it is not spoken of any other, nor to be thought of any other. That there should be here an error *personæ*, a mistake concerning the person spoken of, it may prove a most destructive error. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" This is the question which John directs his disciples to put to Christ for their information, not for his own, that he might gain them an opportunity of being convinced and satisfied in the great and important question of that age; which yet could not be of greater importance to that age than it is to our own, nor of greater to John's disciples than it is to every one of us: and we see what our Lord saith to it, "Tell John what you hear and see;" such and such wonders are wrought and done. And he adds in the close of all, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" which words would carry a kind and benign import with them beyond all that can be expressed. But they carry withal an intimated menace, as any one may apprehend—"Blessed is he that is not offended in me;" as if he should have said, Such an one hath a merciful and wonderful deliverance, "he that is not offended in me." But it is also as if he had said, Woe be to him that is; when so clear a light shines concerning me, and when there is so bright and so express a discovery; blessed is he that doth not stumble, blessed is he that doth not mistake, that doth not take one for another. The intimation is plain, nothing but wrath and vengeance and woe must hang over the guilty heads of them that do take one for another in such a case; and when the light that

shines is so clear, so as that none can be guilty of a mistake, but it must be a wilful mistake if any should take another for me.

And you see how this one person is notified here, only by the name Jesus, as the subject of the affirmation, the Saviour. A name that signifies the aptitude of the person unto the office that he was to bear and manage. You know it was foretold and directed by the immediate counsel of Heaven, that he should be called Jesus; "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. It was a rivaling of the hero of the world, who did affect such titles, and even that very title, which the pagans did therefore bestow sometimes upon their gods, and sometimes upon their kings, to wit, Saviour; the usual name among them of Jupiter, and with which some of their great princes did dignify themselves, and affected to be dignified by, as particularly Demetrius Soter. This was an affectation among the great ones of the world to claim this very name. Well, our Lord will be known to be the Jesus. This name is his, appropriated to him, to signify to persons one that is to save as no other could, that was to be so eminent and so glorious a Saviour; that person distinguished from others by the specifying circumstances (or the individuating circumstances rather) that did attend him. That Jesus who was born at Bethlehem, and lived at Nazareth, and was crucified at Jerusalem, commonly known there by this name, the name Jesus. It is of him peculiarly and alone that this is said, he is the Christ.

[2.] And that is the thing that is to be believed concerning him, that he is the Christ. The former was the personal name, this the name of office, and speaks of the person as invested with his office, or affirms that investiture concerning his office that he is invested therewith. This indeed is variously expressed, that is the attribute given to the subject under this latter name. Sometimes the same thing is said concerning the believing this Jesus to be the Son of God; that doth equally entitle to the same great privilege, and brings a man into the same safe state, implies the same change and transformation upon his soul, as you see in the foregoing chapter of this epistle, at the 15th verse, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Sometimes the meaning and import of this expression, "is the Christ," is signified by that conjunction with the other, both conjoined, that is, that he is the Christ, and that he is

the Son of God. When our Lord demands of Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. xvi. 15) the various opinions are given, some saying he was Elias, some saying some other of the prophets. Well, but what say you, Peter, and the rest, that I am? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," saith Peter. So you have both conjoined in reference to the same person, as in John xx. 31. "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." These passages plainly intimate to us thus much, that to affirm that Jesus is the Christ, and that he is the Son of God, comes all to one, it amounts to the same thing. To say concerning this person believingly that he is the Christ, or that he is the Son of God, there is an equivalency in the one of these to the other. Sometimes a third expression, of equal import to either of the others, or both the others, is used; "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." A strange saying too, as this of the text seems to be, 1 Cor. ii. 3.; there "Lord," is the name of the office too; the usual style by which he is spoken of in the New Testament, and in some places of the Old too; "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Psalm cx. 1. It only imports that universal and sovereign dominion that did belong to the mediatorial office, the thing signified by the name of Christ. "He is Lord of all," Acts x. 36. A thing that seems slid in by the apostle in the stream and current of his discourse; "he is Lord of all," saith he, in a parenthesis; and so he goes on, dropping that by the way; and no man can say that he is so "but by the Holy Ghost," to wit, with a correspondent disposition of soul internally, vitally, and practically acknowledging him, and subjecting his soul to him as Lord of all, as the Lord, he into whose hands all power is put both in heaven and earth.

But when this is said, "that Jesus is the Christ," and this again is used as an equivalent expression, "that he is the Son of God," or, "he is Lord of all," this only represents and gives us an intimation of the state of the case at that time. He appearing now in the fulness of time upon the stage of this world, various opinions there were of him, some mistaken ones, some very malicious ones, and some that were right and true; this begat a great controversy; it was the question of the time, and the determination of it the right way called the present truth; to wit, the great question concerning this Jesus, who, and

what he was; "I speak these things," saith the apostle, "though you know and are established in the present truth." The main dispute lay between them on the one hand, who believed him to be the Christ, or the Son of God; and them on the other hand, who apprehended him to be a deceiver, an impostor and blasphemer, for saying truly who and what he was. This was the true state of the question, he giving out himself to be the Son of God, calling the great God upon all occasions, Father—"My Father" hath directed me to do so and so, and to say so and so; he giving this out concerning himself, that he "came down from Heaven," that he was "the Son of God," in a most peculiar and appropriate sense; and reporting concerning himself too, (which was of most absolute necessity unto the end and design of his coming) that he might bear the office of Christ and the Messiah, and that he was the Son of God; the determining the one of these on his part would determine and conclude the other. Whereas he did upon all occasions intimate that he was the very person that should come, the Christ, the Messiah, and also that he was the Son of God. If it were true that he was the Son of God, it was impossible that could be false that he was the Messiah, that he was the Christ. For no one could imagine that the Son of God should bring down a lie from Heaven and diffuse it among men: therefore, to say he was the Son of God, was to say he was the Christ too; that is, it plainly implied that whereas he said both, it was impossible he could be the author unto men of a false affirmation concerning himself: and therefore, if he were the Son of God, he in whom the divine nature was in conjunction with the human, in whom the glory of God shone so as to characterize him the only begotten of the Father, (John i. 14;) if it were so avowing himself to be the Christ, the Messiah that was to come, that had been so long expected, even at that very time, he must truly and really be so. And so there was no medium between these two, his being the Son of God, and his being a deceiver and impostor; no medium, for if he was not the one, he was the other; if he was not the Son of God, he must deceive in saying he was the Christ. But he being the Son of God, that being sufficiently evinced, or evident that he was so, must give sufficient credit to this affirmation concerning himself, that he was also the Christ, he that was to come, so as that there was not another to be looked for.

Now what this Christ signifies, and what the affirming

this Jesus to be the Christ must import, have been hinted to you already. But it is to be more distinctly considered. It is (as you have heard) a name of office, as the other is a personal name. And this word signifies his unction to that office; so Messiah signifies, in the Hebrew language, and Χριστος in the Greek, an anointed person, and the import of that must be collected from the known usage of this and of former ages, and the continued usage of the same thing, even to this day, in all successive ages since; that is to invest and inaugurate persons into high and great offices by unction or anointing. And two things, as to this person, this unction must signify, when it is said he was anointed above his fellows with joy and gladness, to wit, with triumph, (as high triumphs have been always used to attend the inauguration or coronation of princes,) two things as to him this unction must signify: 1. Authorization, and 2. Qualification. The former of these is relative, and the latter real.

First, Authorization; the conveying to him all the authority belonging to the high office of Mediator. He is the person authorized, (as the inauguration of princes signifies that,) either conferring or acknowledging the high authority in them belonging to their high office. Him hath God the Father sealed. He carries the signature, the character of the great God upon him, as his anointed one, his sealed one, marked out for the great work and office which he was to sustain and bear. But,

Secondly, It signifies qualification too. A real endowment, as well as that relative one. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me." Isaiah lxi. 1. It signifies that mighty plenitude of the Spirit which descended and flowed down upon him, whereby whatsoever was requisite to the faithful and successful discharge of the work and business which was conferred upon the man Christ, the divine nature being so intimately united with the human, it signified that all the fulness of Godhead did come to inhabit this man, and so to suit him every way for the great affairs of that high and important office into which he was now put.

And this was the thing to be believed in opposition to the opposers of that time, and of all after-times; who were of two sorts then as they have been continually since, to wit, Pagans and Jews; the former whereof did disbelieve that there needed to be any Messiah at all; and the latter disbelieved that this was he. The former could have no apprehension that there was any need of a Messiah

or a Christ at all. That was the case of the Pagan world; and much less could they believe that this Christ should ever need to be crucified: and therefore the doctrine of him, and especially of his cross, was to the wise Pagans foolishness. What needs any such transaction between God and men in such a way as this, that there were come down one from heaven into this world, to die upon earth a sacrifice to the justice of heaven? Who can imagine such a thing as this, say the wiser Pagans. There is no need of any Christ at all, say they.

The Jews, they were taught long before to apprehend and believe there was need of a Christ; though they mistook much here what he was to do, and what the business of his office and coming was; but yet they had that gospel among them, under veils and shadows and typical representations, which did only hold forth to them what was the business and errand upon which Christ came into the world. All their sacrifices taught them, and no doubt to whom an understanding was given, as this apostle's expression afterwards, is in this same chapter, "They who had the given understanding to know him that is true," verse 20, they did understand that the sacrifices under their law, and offered according to the direction of it, must terminate in one greater sacrifice. They had that volume in their hands concerning which it is said, Ps. xl. 6, 7, "In the volume of the book it is written of me, that when sacrifices and offerings will not serve the turn, (that is, of mean, abject, brute creatures) I must come after all to do thy will, O God." That is to be performed and done by me which those sacrifices were useless and insignificant for: no other way useful but as they did point out me, who was to come, as the substance and fulness and accomplishment of them all. It was a thing generally taught, (whether it were understood or no among the Jews,) that there was to be a Christ, a Messiah, an everlasting high priest, as his office is sometimes dignified by that title, more eminently and principally in Psalm cx. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." This the Jews found in the sacred records which they had among them, and in their hands. But yet when he came, they did not think this was he. And so as that was a question between the pagans and christians, whether there ought to be any Christ or no, so it was a question of equal importance between them and the Jews, whether this were the person. And therefore that he doth with so much authority and severity charge upon those that he conversed

among in the days of his flesh, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins. It is not believing an indefinite Christ or Messiah to come, that will serve the turn now, now that there is a sufficient notification of the person; but now you are not only to believe that there is a Messiah to come, but now if you do not believe that I am he, you are lost creatures, you die under the unatoned guilt of all your other sins, and under the superadded guilt of this sin, not believing the revelation that is made by the great God of this his Christ, when it was made with so much clearness that it was impossible any discovery could have carried more convictive evidence with it than that did. This now was the thing to be believed concerning this Jesus. But then, you will say,

(2.) What doth the believing of this import? What is it to believe it, so as to give a ground for this affirmation concerning the belief of it, that he is born of God? Why, for this it is plain, in the

First place, this believing that Jesus is Christ must carry with it an understanding and a judicious assent of the truth of the affirmation that so he is; that he is indeed the Christ. An understanding and judicious assent: it cannot be less. Faith concerning this so important a thing is not the act of a fool, it must be an act suitable to an intelligent, apprehensive mind; and therefore if this be not assented to with the understanding and judgment, it is as if it were not assented to at all. To assent to this, understandingly and with judgment, is to apprehend some valid and sufficient ground upon which it is to be assented to. I pray consider this well; ungrounded faith is no faith: if there be never so clear and demonstrative ground upon which this truth is in itself founded, that Jesus is the Christ; if it be not at all apprehended by me, if I believe this at random, if men will call that believing when I believe and I cannot tell why, and I care not why, I believe as a matter of common hearsay or of uncertain report, I take it up from the people amongst whom I live. Such an ungrounded faith as this is a nullity, a perfect nullity, it goes for nothing; it is not believing, it is but a hovering, fluttering opination, a vague opinion only I met with by chance, a thing that falls in my way; my religion, as I am a Christian, is to me a casualty. I am a Christian, but upon the same terms upon which they who live in the same country are Mahometans; and of the Jews, where they are of the Jewish faith, of infidelity rather. And this is all that the most

have to say for their being Christians: that religion which was the religion of my forefathers, which is the religion of the country where I live, which is the religion established by law, which is the religion that most suits my external conveniences to profess. I could not commodiously (it may be not safely) live in the country where I live, save on this profession, and not continuing this profession. That which is the ground of the belief of the most that go under the name of Christians, is but just the same, *mutatis mutandis*, that is the ground of their faith and religion who inhabit the Pagan world, in all the most dark and dismal quarters of it; they take their faith the same way. The Mahomedans, though less gross Pagans, take up their faith the same way. And so have the Jews done their faith the same way ever since Judaism came to be opposed to Christianity: therefore there must be some great flaw in this matter.

Most certain it is, that such grounds as do equally serve to infer falsehood and truth must be in themselves false. From truth nothing but truth can follow; but from falsehood sometimes that which is true, and sometimes that which is false (as circumstances may be varied) will follow. And it is plain, that from this ground a falsehood doth follow many times and often, yea oftener, than truth. To wit, when the ground is that my religion is descended from my ancestors, it is the religion of the country where I live, it is established by law, it makes for my conveniency to be of this religion, it would be a great prejudice or reproach to me not to be of it, or profess the contrary. These grounds will as well infer a falsehood, as they happen to do truth in the present case, because they are common grounds upon which all the mistaken and false religions in the world are equally founded as well as the true.

But then if the matter be so, see what you are to account or reckon concerning such an ungrounded faith, be the matter of it what it will; if the grounds of it be false and wrong it is vain faith, as it is intimated by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2, "I declare unto you the Gospel which ye have believed, which you have received, which hath been preached to you, and wherein you stand, and by which also you shall be saved, if you keep in the way that I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." The Greek word there used signifies sometimes *temere*; sometimes *frustra;* when it signifies the former, it is believed without ground; when it signifies the latter, it is believing without effect. Both ways faith may be vain. When I believe a

thing without any ground, or without any proportionate ground, that is, I believe a divine truth, but with no divine faith, or not relying in my belief upon a divine testimony, which is the thing that specifically distinguisheth divine faith from human faith. The faith is as the ground of it is. If my faith rest upon an human testimony, it is an human faith; if it rest upon a divine ground, then it is a divine faith, and the efficacy of it is proportionable to the ground of it. Do but observe that, 1 Thess. ii. 13, the Apostle gives thanks for those Thessalonians, "that they received the gospel not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually works in them that believe." We can never believe aright that Jesus is the Christ, but as taking it upon the authority of a divine testimony. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record he hath given of his Son." Why do I believe Jesus to be the Christ? because the eternal God hath given his testimony concerning him that so he is. This never enters into the minds of the most. They never consider who testifies this; only this is a common opinion, and they have happened upon it. But a testimony from heaven concerning him, hath averred and affirmed him to be the Christ, is that which must take hold of men's souls, and come with power upon them, if ever they do in truth believe that Jesus is the Christ. A man's believing comes all to nothing without this, that there is a divine testimony. But how such a divine testimony is to be evidenced to be divine, or may appear to be so, will be matter of after consideration, as that also will, what is imported in being born of God. Such a faith as the gospel requires, and challenges to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, it carries that mighty and marvellous power along with it as to transform a man's soul, to make him a new man. Any man that pretends to this faith, he is but just as he was before; the same man that he was, as vain, as earthly, as carnal, as strange to God, he lives at the same rate of ungodliness that formerly he did, or that other men actually do; for this man to pretend he believes that Jesus is the Christ, it is a pretence that carries its own confutation and shame in it.

He that understandingly believes Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that understands why he believes it, and what this Christ was appointed for, to reconcile, to reduce us, and bring us back to God, to intitle to the divine favour, and to engage us in the divine communion: such a man as doth in good earnest believe this, is quite another man, as if

he were but new born. Here is a creature produced that was not before: it is as if you were newly come into the world, and into being. If you do sincerely and truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, it is a thing that speaks you just new born; that is, you are born quite another creature; as we shall have occasion further to shew. "Old things are done away, and all things are become new." This faith cannot be unaccompanied with such an impression on the soul, that makes a man a godlike creature in comparison to what he was before: for every one that is born of God is like God by that very birth. It is true, that a thing may be made by another that is not like him, but what one begets or is born of him that hath the same nature, that bears his natural image; it is a creature new-produced, that imitates God, that resembles God, in whom this faith obtains concerning Jesus that he is the Christ.

I have chosen to insist upon this subject upon that account, and with this design, (as many things have been spoken of the same import, and upon the same design from time to time) that we may not impose upon ourselves, and be cheated by the name of faith instead of the thing. Will the shadow of faith save a man? Will it save a man to be called a believer, and to be no such thing? That faith that terminates upon Jesus as the Christ, which will save a man, must so transform him too, so as that he may truly admit to have it said of him, this is a man born of God. I see his faith makes him quite a new man throughout; for he was a stranger to God, an enemy to God, lived in all manner of ungodliness; but O! what a change is wrought? Now he resembles God, now he doth like God; he makes it his business to do good; the divine excellencies shine in him, and are conspicuous whersoever he goes, and in whatsoever he does. To talk of one believing Jesus to be the Christ, who doth not appear to be born of God, doth not appear to be of an heavenly descent or birth, you may as well say such an one is a star, or an angel, as a believer. A believer, and one born of God, are expressions that do signify alternately one another as broad as long: so that every believer is born of God, and that every one that is born of God is a believer.

SERMON XXXIX.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I HAVE spoken to the general ground of this believing Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, upon that testimony which God hath given concerning him, that so he is.

But then there are many subservient grounds which have that use to notify to us the divinity of this revelation, or of this record; or whereupon we have reason to judge the testimony divine. And they are such as these:

[1.] The many prophecies that went before of him. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy, Rev. xix. 10. God speaking by the mouth of all his prophets (as if all had but one mouth) concerning his Christ; so conscient and agreeing was their testimony, though in several successive ages. "Of him bear all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. "And which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just one;" as dying Stephen speaks, Acts vii. 52. It would be a long business, and (I hope) among you not necessary, to recite all the prophecies, more ancient and more late, which were in the several ages given concerning Christ before he came. He refers himself to all the Scriptures that were then in his time extant, to wit, those of the Old Testament, and those particularly of Moses. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," John v. 39. He must refer there principally to the prophetical writings contained in those writings. And he afterwards runs back as high as Moses, the penman of the first sacred writings. Moses (saith he) wrote of me, verse 46. But if ye will not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe my words? Great prophecies there were concerning him, even in the writings of Moses; and he wrote of times far back, even from the beginning, for he spake of 2000 years and upwards, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head: a plain prophecy concerning this same Jesus, and that he was to be the Christ. That the

* Preached, March 18, 1693.

sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come; and that to him the gathering of the people should be. And how many express prophecies do you find concerning him afterwards in the books of the Psalmists. "Why do the heathen rage?" The most express quotation that we have out of the Old Testament, that we have any where in the New, as to what afterwards follows in that Psalm, the Apostle, Acts xiii. quotes particularly the second Psalm, saying, concerning this his Christ, against whom the heathen did rage, even as they did against the Father; "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The things that were said of him after he did come, to wit, that he was Lord of all. This was predicted and foretold concerning him so long before, that the heathen, and all the ends of the earth, should lie within the compass of his vast territory and dominion. Too great indeed to be called a territory: for all power was given him in heaven and in earth. He is Lord of all. It would be endless to recite all the passages to you which have this manifest application. It was foretold concerning him by the prophets, that two natures were to meet in his person. An admirable discovery, and a most express and plain one, that is, that one and the same person was to be born a child, and to be the mighty God. Isaiah ix. 6, "To us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and he shall be called Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." In reference to us, he fitly hath that title too. Not in reference to the Trinity, but in reference to us. His divine original was plainly there presignified to us, as in other texts of the Old Testament. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand." And the land which he had a more peculiar relation to, is called "Emmanuel's land, God with us." That his goings forth are said to be "from everlasting," even his, who was to be born at Bethlehem. Mic. v. 2. Many most circumstantial things, as well as those great and substantial ones, were predicted and foretold; the punctual correspondence whereunto of the event did most plainly declare the divinity of the testimony. That is, that those were most divinely inspired prophets, who could at so vast a distance of time testify such and such things concerning him. Well might the Spirit of prophecy, working in those prophets, be called the testimony of Jesus. As when the parting of his garments by lot, before spoken

of, the piercing of his hands and feet, the giving him gall and vinegar to drink, with many more such things; and that he should be born at Bethlehem, when, as that was a casualty, humanly speaking it was no more than so, his mother being surprised upon a journey, and passing through that place. But these things I must not insist upon.

[2.] It speaks the divinity of that testimony given concerning him, that he entered in so extraordinary a way into this world. I may in the highest sense say, that he had so illustrious a birth. Illustrious, not by any thing of lustre derived and borrowed from this earth; that was too mean a thing to make his birth illustrious; but as he was of heavenly descent, the illustriousness of it was by a light and glory which did accompany it from Heaven. His birth was not signalized by the state and pomp of embassies from the courts of we know not how many princes; but by the descent of multitudes of glorious angels, proclaiming it as "glad tidings of great joy" which should be to all people; and an extraordinary star, which signalized this, and which was the guide to those wise sages who by special divine instinct came to do an homage to him, not without a secret signification of that right he was to have in the remotest parts of the world, and all the world over. They came from far to pay that homage, and to signify that his dominion should be far and near. And,

[3.] His most divine and heavenly doctrine was mightily subsidiary unto this record of God concerning him, that he was the Christ and his own Son; for how did he often, when he spake, transport his hearers? How were they astonished sometimes at his doctrine, (as Matthew vii. latter end) for there were such characters did attend it as manifestly did distinguish it. He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes, though they were authorized teachers among that people too. The ear that heard him blessed him, and the eye that saw him bare witness to him. You find, Luke iv. 17, that when he had pitched upon a text in one of the synagogues, to wit, that of Isaiah lxi. 1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor;" when he came to dilate upon that subject, all the assembly are amazed, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. And when the officers are sent to apprehend him, and bring him before the judicature at Jerusalem, they come back confounded men, without their errand's end; they are examined, and enquired why they

had not brought him? say they, "Never man spake as this man; a divine person, we dare not touch him, we dare lay no hand upon so sacred an one as he appears to be." And,

[4.] The wonderful works, which, through the whole course of his ministration, after he began, he continually did to testify and bear witness to the truth of what he repeatedly affirmed concerning himself, that he was Christ. When John's disciples were sent to him (not for John's sake, but their own) to know, "Art thou he that shall come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) he gives them an answer from what they might see and hear, "Go and tell John the things that ye see and hear; (that is) The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Implying all this to be a sufficient testification who he was. And those words (though they are mild and soft, and palmy and pleasant), "Blessed is he that is not offended in me," yet they carry a sting in them—they breathe terror too; for this plain intimation is carried in them, "Woe to him that is offended when so clear light shines, when there is so plain and manifest a discovery who I am: fearful is the case of that man who stumbles, takes offence, and cannot see when so bright light shines upon him, revealing me." Unto these words of his he makes his frequent appeal, in his many conflicts with the Jews, when they charge him with the solitariness of his testimony. "Thou bearest witness of thyself, thy witness is not true." That he disclaims; though justly tells them too, that if he did bear witness of himself, yet his witness was true. But he did not bear witness of himself singly and alone; "My Father beareth witness of me, and the works that I do they bear witness of me." And he returns it upon them, "If another comes in his own name, him will ye believe: I come in my Father's name, and ye will not receive me." John v. 43.

[5.] The express vocal testimony (besides that stated one that we have in the sacred records) given again and again from Heaven concerning him, at three noted times, his birth, his baptism, and his transfiguration. At his birth, by the embassy of angels, of which you have heard so much already; at his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended as a dove lighting upon him, and that voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To be that Son of God and the Christ (as the case is stated,)

you have heard, must signify the same thing. They are put together often, "Christ the Son of the living God." Matt. xvi. 16. "Christ, the Son of God." Mark i. 1. That being the great question of that time. He avowing himself to be the Son of God; they charging him, who were his enemies, to be a deceiver and impostor: when that point indeed was gained, that he was the Son of God, no deceiver, no impostor, that must consequently include necessarily that he was the Christ; because that he always testified concerning himself. And if he were the Son of God, he could not be the author of a false testimony, or of an injurious usurpation of a dignity and office that belonged not to him. And at his transfiguration, how solemn and how glorious was the vocal testimony from Heaven concerning him, when he took up, not all the disciples, but a competent number (in common human estimate two or three being sufficient to prove the truth of a matter of fact in such a case,) he takes such a number as might certify the rest, and so publish the whole business to the world, when it should be seasonable and consistent with the design of such a manifestation as that was. When he had Peter, James, and John with him in the Mount, where he was transfigured before them; and then, as the apostle Peter (who was one of the number, and an eye witness), doth himself testify, 2 Pet. i. 17; and tells us what he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears. Many of you may remember I insisted largely heretofore upon that context. "We have not followed (saith he) cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What place could there be left for reasonable doubt, whether God did not sufficiently own this Jesus to be the Christ, when there came "such a voice from the excellent glory" concerning him, to this same purpose, notified and testified as any matter of fact ought to be. And then,

[6.] His most amazing death, with so tremendous circumstances as the gospel reports it: such as that, though he could not be brought to it but by consent, till he was pleased in order thereunto to retract the glorious beams of his Majesty, that they might not withhold and frighten those, that were to be the executioners of that horrid tra-

gedy, from doing the thing itself which the hand and counsel of God had determined should be done. He is therefore said not to have his life taken from him; to wit, whether he would or no, but "he laid it down." There must be consent in the case; otherwise, had he let out those beams of majesty continually that shone so illustriously in him, even in the very confines of that hour and power of darkness that was coming upon him, they had not dared to do it. You see that the assassinates, that they are even at the first attack beaten aback by those appearances of him, those characters of divinity, that some way or other appeared, and their own dread, that they fall flat to the ground; so that he is constrained to vail himself, and draw some kind of cloud over that glory, that they might not be withheld from going on; though it was a thing that he must spontaneously yield to, or it could not have been done. But when he did yield to it, and it was done, with what amazing circumstances was it attended, that all might know how extraordinary a person he was! Immediately the sun withdraws his head. Such an eclipse ensues, the like whereof was never known in the world besides; and of which some noted Pagan writers give an account with wonder. The powers of Heaven are shaken, so as that from that great Pagan these words were extorted, "That either the God of nature suffered, or the whole frame of things is suffering a dissolution." The earth is shaken and torn; the graves are opened, and the dead arise, many of them, and go into the holy city. The Roman centurion, a Pagan (who was by office to superintend the execution,) upon the sight of all this, gives him the cause against the assassinates and murderers; to wit, that whereas this was the question, Is he a deceiver, or is he the Son of God? This was the question on which he died. He gives him the cause, saying, "Verily this is the Son of God." He speaks it in reference to the controversy then agitated and on the stage. What is this man, that here is dying, affixed to this cross? Was he what the Jews averred him to be? or was he what he averred himself to be? Why that is decided on his side by this impartial Pagan. And,

[7.] His glorious Resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and that upon which the stress of the whole cause was all along after laid. And it was the whole business of the apostleship to bear witness to his resurrection. They were twelve of them. A sufficient number to testify that they had often seen him when arisen.

The highest testimony that God could from Heaven have given concerning him; that when he died under that false and malicious imputation, as a deceiver and blasphemer, that Heaven might own him to be what he said he was. Though it was necessary he should be permitted to die, yet he recovers, and is raised up from the dead, and made a glorious triumph over death; the pangs whereof it was impossible should hold him, and therefore they are loosed; the pangs and bonds of it could hold him no longer. And,

[8.] The wonderful fortitude and boldness wherewith his inspired disciples and apostles did testify concerning his resurrection afterwards, and that he was the Christ. That was the business of the apostolical office, to bear witness to his resurrection; Matthias was chosen to fill up the number, and join with the rest to bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord, that all the world that way might know who and what he was. With great boldness did the apostles bear witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and a divine presence was with them herein. They testified it from time to time, even to the very faces of those powers under which he suffered; by whose instigation, at least, if not by their authority. The Sanhedrim, the Jewish magistracy, could not put a man to death at that time, they being wholly under the Roman power. But they were the instigators; and yet from time to time, to their very faces, do these poor illiterate men testify, that God had raised him from the dead whom ye have crucified, and him of whom ye were the betrayers and murderers. And this was the thing that stung them and cut them to the heart. You think to bring this man's blood upon us. But that they never spared to do. A most divine fortitude. That to the face of these powers, by whom such things were acted against our Lord, these men should, at the utmost peril of their own lives, so oppose themselves and their testimony, who but a little before did creep and sneak to the denial of our Lord, as you know Peter himself did. Before he was crucified, he did not know the man; afterwards he tells the greatest of them to their faces, You have been his betrayers and murderers. And,

[9.] The terrible vengeance that hath followed hereupon, upon the nation of the Jews. A mighty subsidiary testimony. "Your house is left unto you desolate." Our Lord foretold them how it would be. "Not one stone should be left upon another, even as to their temple, (the thing wherein they so much gloried) that should not be thrown

down." He weeps over self-desolating Jerusalem. "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," when he saw the calamity that was coming; but it came, and not a tittle failed of what was foretold, and according to what the prophets of old did foretell. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." Hosea ix. 17. That people, while they are yet in being in that scattered dispersed state (wherein the world knows they are unto this day,) are a perpetual testimony, throughout all succeeding ages, of the truth of that Gospel and Christianity which they with so horrid malignity opposed themselves unto. And,

[10.] The marvellous success which the Gospel had since. That success it had immediately after the resurrection of our Lord: for he that descended, the same ascended, "that he might fill all things." Upon that ascent of his, what a mighty descent was there of the Spirit and power of God, that bore down all opposition! The Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. And in this and that part of the world, you find there are solemn appeals. Do you not know what manner of entrance we had in this place and that place, and how men "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son Jesus, who saveth from wrath to come?" 1 Thess. i. latter end. How did the gospel fly like lightning from one part and quarter of the world to another! How soon did it run through Judea and Samaria, and after that into remoter parts! A vast circuit in that age, and by the ministry of these very apostles. A gospel that began to be spoken by the Lord himself, but was confirmed by them that heard him; "God bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Heb. ii. 4. That by which the apostle doth enforce that solemn caution, to take heed of letting slip the things that they had heard. For, saith he, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which began to be spoken?" And I may add,

[11.] The strange preservation of the Christian cause and interest through all successive times and ages. That when all the powers of earth and hell were combined to root and raze out Christianity, and all the vestiges and memorials of it, that could never be effected, to this day. That as the spreading of the Gospel was by no human power, so no human power could prevail to extinguish it. It was not

in the way wherein the Mahomedan empire and religion did propagate themselves together, that this was propagated, to wit, by force and arms, and by the temptation of secular advantages, but by its own native and self-recommending light and lustre, and great design. And as it was propagated by no human means, so by no human means or power could it be extinguished, but hath grown upon the world in spite of the world, except the assigned foretold time of the apostasy, that dark and dismal interval wherein that work hath been so long at a stand, and out of which we are to expect its glorious revival.

All these things do concur to evince that that Revelation which hath been made to us concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, is from God: and so carries an indubitable truth in it to be relied upon. And it is upon that main and principal ground that our belief concerning him, that this Jesus is the Christ, must be built and rest, otherwise it is none of the faith which the Gospel claims to it. And it is all one to say the Gospel is a fable, and to believe it to be true and upon no ground, we cannot tell why or how.

SERMON XL.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

We have gone on to shew, what the believing Jesus to be the Son of God is. And so much having been said concerning the grounds, both principal and subservient, of this belief, I shall superadd hereunto in the

Second place, what I reckon is not less necessary concerning the properties of it, that you may the more distinctly understand what sort of belief this must be that is to be given unto so great and important a truth, Jesus is the Christ. And I shall so state the properties of this belief as that they may visibly stand in that opposition wherein is requisite they should be set, to that common false belief which multitudes do satisfy and deceive themselves by at once to their destruction. You may, *eadem opera*, by the same cast of your eye discern the properties of that common

* Preached 25th March 1694.

false belief, and of that sincere faith concerning this truth, that the one may be avoided and declined, and the other may be aimed at with a restless endeavour and pursuit; so as that none may satisfy themselves till they can say, I find the belief of this great truth hath now its place in my soul, which will be finally saving to it.

There needs both much caution and much light to avoid the mistaken false faith of the multitude concerning this thing. I call it false, not doubting any of you apprehend that it is too possible a thing that there may be a very false faith of the greatest truth. One may believe the most important truth that can fall under human faith with a false faith. The thing is true that is believed in such cases, but it is not believed truly. And that is the sort of faith which I would have you know and avoid. And when you know what you are not to rest in, you will with the same light discern wherein you may safely rest. About a matter of such importance as this, it very much concerns both speaker and hearers at any time to speak and hear in agonies, and with hearts full of solicitude, lest we should mistake ourselves in a matter upon which eternity doth so immediately and entirely depend. Now,

1. The deceiving false faith of the multitude in this matter is but negative; but the sincere belief of this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, is a most positive act of the soul. The common belief in this case is but a negative belief. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Yes, shall one tell you off hand, without deliberation or doubt, I do believe it. And what is the meaning of that? He believes it only thus, he doth not believe the contrary. He hath no formed opposite belief in his mind, and therefore thinks himself a very good believer. Whenas his believing is nothing else but a negation, an utter negation; to wit, he doth not disbelieve it. As if he should say, your question is to me upon the matter a new one, a new question, I never thought much of the business. I never asked myself whether I believed Jesus to be the Christ, yea or no. And for my part I have no contrary belief, and therefore hand over head he concludes himself a very good sound believer of this matter. But that faith which the Gospel claims, and which the necessities of souls do require and challenge, that they may have life by Christ, it is a most positive act of the soul, wherein the soul hath a real exercise. There is an exerted power of the soul put forth in this act, so that nothing can be more positive than that is. It is a substan-

tial act of the soul, according as substance doth signify positive entity. And so is this faith called, it is the very substance of the thing believed, whatsoever that be, Heb. xi. 1. This other common faith hath no substance in it. Grasp it, feel it, it is but a shadow, hath nothing of substance. Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? Yes, I do believe it; that is, there is as much substance in it as their saying so; as much as there is in the sound of a word, and no more. It is a mere negative thing, there is nothing positive in it.

2. The former of these is an ignorant, but the other a most intelligent act, proceeding upon knowledge. The deceived multitude, when they pretend Jesus to be the Christ, they believe they know not what; they say they believe Jesus is the Christ, but they never consider what they mean by Christ. When they say this Jesus is the Christ, what the signification of that name is they never trouble themselves to understand, they were never at leisure to think of such matter. Indeed they have often heard the word, but they have not a meaning in their minds correspondent to that word (Christ) what it imports, what signification it carries with it; and so what is affirmed concerning this Jesus when he is affirmed to be the Christ, they neither have what we speak nor whereof we affirm about it. Jesus is considered by them as an ordinary person that lived so many years ago; but to say of him, that he is the Christ, you might as well have said nothing: they believe hand over head, but they believe they know not what.

But, now, when any one doth sincerely believe Jesus to be the Christ, he, believing it, understands what this Christ is, and what the name Christ signifies, the anointed one of God unto that great office of mediatorship between God and man; and was therefore every way qualified for the high and great work of that office, invested with that full authority which belongs to such an office. All power is given to him, both in heaven and in earth: one full of grace and truth: in whom all the divine excellencies were resplendent and most conspicuous, which were to have their exercise in the discharge of the work of this mighty office. So that the apprehensive mind of a sincere believer in this thing runs a vast compass; when it hears the name of Christ, it traverseth heaven and earth; it runs through all the creation; for as such an one Christ is considered "over all, God blessed for ever." One that descended; the same that afterwards ascended, that he might fill all things. And he could not be Christ else: one that must have an universal

power over all minds and over all creatures: and one that can do whatsoever he will, both in heaven and earth, and all deep places; but whose kindness and benignity inclines him to the doing of all the good that any receptive and capable subject shall admit of; and to make many a one capable and receptive that is of itself quite otherwise. When, such mighty texts as we find upon record concerning Christ, these many glorious things that are spoken of him come in view, O how is such an one enlightened by the lustre of any such text that speaks concerning Christ! Yes; that represents him to me, concerning whom my faith hath its present exercise, that it is for Jesus to be the Christ, to wit, that child born for us, that Son given to us, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Jesus is the Christ; that is, he is the wonderful counsellor. When again we are told in Scripture that this is he who was in the beginning with God, and that he was God, and by whom the worlds were made, and that without whom nothing was made that was made; that came and descended, the eternal word and wisdom of the Father, and was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and his glory shone as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Yes, this is my Christ! I believe that that Jesus who dwelt at Nazareth, born at Bethlehem, was such a Christ. He by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, things in heaven and earth; this is my Christ. He that is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Lord God almighty. He that was dead and is alive again and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death. This is my Christ. The name Christ fills such a man's soul with light and glory, even in that very instant when he believes this Jesus to be the Christ; so as that admitting him into the mind under this notion, it insensibly admits a deity in his all-comprehending fulness. He doth not believe a trivial thing concerning this Jesus, when he believes him to be the Christ, but believes him to be all in all. This is my all, and the universal all unto whosoever they are that shall come to partake felicity by him at length. This is nothing like the mock faith of the multitude, that think themselves well if off-hand they answer you the question when you ask, Is Jesus the Christ. Yes—But they neither know nor consider what Christ means, nor what they attribute to this Jesus, in calling him the Christ. Again,

3. That former belief concerning him, it is a dubious, hovering, and fluctuating thing. The sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is peremptory, and full of a concomitant certainty, and thorough persuasion of mind concerning him that so indeed he is. As to the former, what do you think? "Was that Jesus the Christ, or are we to look for another?" Here the mind hangs in a dubious suspense, and they rather say, No sure, we are not to look for another, because he came so long ago, and there hath no other appeared since. But concerning the sincere believer, this is the character under which we may conceive of him, John vi. 68, "We believe and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." Many minds in those days hung in doubt; and less of doubting may appear among us, because we seldom hear the question asked. With many, the mind hangs on a suspense and indifferency. Is this the Christ, or is another to be he? Why this is as good as another; this may do as well as another; and for many years we have heard no talk of another, nor do we hear that for many an age by-past. But, saith the sincere believer, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. A sincere belief in this matter determines the mind, so that there it pitcheth. As it is when the balance is cast, and gives over quivering, here we are at a point. "Whom say ye that I am?" saith our Lord to them. Matt. xvi. 16. And Peter answered for the rest, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." See how our Lord owns and accepts his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus it is when a divine revelation shines into the heart. I am afraid that that belief is too great a rarity in our age, concerning which it may be truly said, it is not by the product of flesh and blood. O! how few are the souls that may avow it before the Lord, I have that belief in me, of Jesus being the Christ, that comes not from flesh and blood. It is not flesh and blood that hath prompted to this, but a divine light and mighty power from above upon my soul. And it is such a faith that makes a blessed man. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." O! blessed man, that such a faith as this hath entered thy soul, that such a beam of heavenly and divine light hath been struck down into it. It is a great thing if, laying our hands upon our hearts, we can apply this pronounced blessedness to ourselves, as much as if it had been said to us by name. O! blessed, thou such an one, thou John, Thomas, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto

thee, but the eternal Father, he hath revealed his own Son, he hath taught thee to own him for his Christ, and his own Son. We believe and are sure; such a belief as carries a certainty with it, not that doth altogether exclude, at some certain intervals, a *formido oppositi*. There may be that which morality and policy is wont to style a *plena voluntas*, where there is a determination strong enough to carry a man to consequent acts. And so there may be a *plenum judicium*, not that totally excludes every degree of the contrary, but that prevails over every such degree; and so is determinative, carries the course and current of a man's practical power with it, consequently and agreeably thereunto. So we are to conceive concerning this certainty, that I am not in that dubious suspense, whether this Jesus be the Christ as thereby to surcease and desist from that which ought to be consequent thereupon, to wit, venturing my soul upon him, devoting myself to him, paying obedience to his laws, laying the stress and weight of all my concernments upon his faithfulness, love, and fulness. It is certainty in such a sense, that prevails so far as to govern my consequent resolutions and actions. And,

4. The false deceiving faith of the multitude in this matter is cold and dead, unoperative and without efficacy; lets their hearts remain as stones or clods of clay under it, unaffected and unmoved. But this belief, when it is sincere, is vivid, lively, affectionate, and most efficacious; productive of whatsoever is suitable and correspondent hereunto. A vast difference there is in this respect also! I am sure the difference cannot be greater than the importance is. But it is a very great difference that appears here between belief and belief. A belief that never moves my soul, and is as if it had never touched it. According as some fantastically speak (your enthusiastical writers among the Papists, some of them) concerning theoretical knowledge, wherein they place the sum all religion, that it doth *tangere intangibiliter*, it touches the mind as if it never touched it; indeed this is the deceiving belief of the multitude, they have a belief that so toucheth their minds that it cannot be perceived it ever touched it, it never touched their minds at all, but leaves them unimpressed; there is no signature left behind, no mark, no character, by which it can be said such a faith was ever there. That is, notwithstanding, all the belief they pretend to concerning this Jesus, and concerning the great things of the Christian Religion (whereof this is the sum;) their hearts are as dead, as cold, as terrene, as unaffected, as if they had never

heard of any such thing, void of all kind of impression. Dost thou believe Jesus to be the Christ, and retain an hard heart, a dead heart, a stupid heart, touched with nothing, having no sense, no feeling of any thing that this great truth carries so plain a signification of in it? What doth this Jesus being the Christ, signify? It plainly signifies the lost, undone state of souls, the miserable condition of men in this world, that there needed such a Jesus, such a Christ to descend and come down from heaven with such fulness and divine power. When a man can believe Jesus to be the Christ (as he saith he doth) but it never moves his soul one way or other; his faith makes no more impression upon him than if he had never believed or heard of such a thing, or than if he had believed the quite contrary. Be no more affected with Christ by believing him to be the Christ, than if he had believed him to be a deceiver and an impostor; his heart as little touched or moved with any suitable, correspondent impression of such a belief of his being the Christ, as if he had never heard of any such thing, or had believed concerning him the quite contrary. Will we call this believing Jesus to be the Christ with a Gospel faith?

On the other hand, the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; it worketh through and through a man's soul—works down into every power and faculty. It is a faith that hath spirit in it, that penetrates and spreads itself into all the regions of a man's soul; as we read of a spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "We having the same spirit of faith," (speaking of what had been said by David many an age before) what doth that signify when he quotes him professing faith in reference to such a thing so long ago: and the Apostle now resumes the matter, and saith, "We have the same spirit of faith." It signifies that faith, wheresoever it hath been sincere and true, even in the most distant times and ages, that may be supposed it is a spirit of faith, or it is a faith full of spirit. Sincere faith is a spiritual thing, a thing that carries life and spirit, and power with it, wherever it is. Pray let us not deceive ourselves about this. They are mighty affections which the belief of such a thing as this must excite and raise in those souls in whom it truly is; especially those two most correspondent unto the person concerning whom we have this belief, that he is the Christ; to wit, reverence and love, and especially that love which rises unto delight and high complacency, the joy taken in him of whom we have this apprehension or this belief.

(1.) Reverence. This belief concerning Jesus, that he is the Christ, it fills the sincere believer with the profoundest reverence of him; so that he falls before him, saying, "My Lord and my God." John xx. 28. He is acknowledged in his glorious greatness when any do sincerely believe this concerning him; he is beheld as on the throne; he is considered as one that having purged our sins is ascended and sitten down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is a great thing to have this belief concerning him, answerably forming a man's spirit into adoring postures. He is now great in our eyes; a glorious one; one that we think it profane ever to look towards but with veneration. We dare not lift an eye towards him but with an adoring soul. O! my great, glorious, and exalted Lord. This is he whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Him whom he hath sealed, to whom he hath given power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him. With such a reverence must this belief be accompanied concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ. And then,

(2.) With complacency; that love that hath heightened itself into a complacential joy thereupon. Do I believe this Jesus to be the Christ? O! how can a pleasant joy be thereupon but spread in my soul? As we find it was when this belief first began to obtain concerning him, John i. 35. We read, that the two disciples of John having received the account, and being satisfied concerning this blessed one, having had John's testimony, that he bare record that he upon whom ye shall see "the Spirit of God descending like a dove is the Son of God;" he having seen this satisfactory sight, and acquainting the other two of his disciples, they run away with it. Oh we have found the Messiah, who by interpretation is the Christ; so say they in transport. What a joy were these good men in, and how did it diffuse and spread among others! They run and tell others, Oh we have found Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. It flies like lightning from one to another, every one being the ready instrument to convey the pleasant notice which they had got concerning this great thing. The joyful Εὕρηκα runs from mouth to mouth, and from ear to ear, and from heart to heart. Εὕρηκα, Εὕρηκα, saith one to another, we have found, we have found the Messiah the Christ. Have we indeed found him? Is it found among us that this Jesus is the Christ? O, what multitudes of transported souls would there be among us!

For it is no excuse that this is no novelty among us: for it is a thing that never ought to grow old. As he is the way of returning sinners to God, that is always new and always living. It is a reproach to us to say that the notion is grown stale among us, of Jesus being the Christ. Instead of being grown old, it is grown to nothing, dwindled away to nothing. It looks but like a notion without any thing at the bottom, that we seem to account hath nothing of reality in it; from our apprehensiveness of the state of the case, and what the design of heaven was in constituting such an one in that high and sacred office that is notified by the name Christ, it is thus become such a notion. But, what? Are not the necessities free and urgent upon us every day for which we did need a Christ? Nay, can we go to God without him? And can we live comfortably in this world without God? Nay, can we draw a breath without him? Are not all things delivered up into his hand? And is not he constituted Lord of all? By the same thing by which we would pretend the commonness of this belief, and the ancientness of it, as a reason why it affects no more, we do (as it were) proclaim the nullity of it, that it doth not only signify little with us, but it signifies nothing; it is an unoperative thing: and to be a dead thing in this kind is to be nothing: as a dead man or the carcase of a man is equivalent to no man, and so is that faith (in the Apostle James's phrase) which is unoperative and works not, dead also. This faith that doth not affect the heart is but as a carcase without a spirit, which is for no valuable purpose and use to be reckoned otherwise of than a mere unformed piece of clay. An unformed piece of clay signifies as much for any valuable purpose as that which is formed into the shape of an human body where there is no spirit, and when it is but a breathless thing.

This of the operativeness and efficacy of this belief in contradistinction to the dead cold faith of the multitude in this matter, leads to what is yet further and more deeply to be considered concerning it; and that is, the residence which this faith hath in the will: for, being so efficacious a thing, it works itself into a government, a regency, a ruling power, into that which is the imperial faculty of the soul; to wit, the will, there it comes to have a throne erected, or rather there it doth enthrone Christ, so as that he comes to be exalted in a subject-will, and is actually entertained there according to that discovery the Gospel makes of him. And so next to this persuasion of the mind,

which is to be distinguished from that which carries with multitudes the same deceiving, insignificant name—I say, besides and next to that persuasion or assent of the mind, there is a compliance of the will that belongs to the essence of this faith. We believe this Jesus to be the Christ, so as to will him accordingly; or by our will to entertain him in a correspondent admission unto the design of the revelation. We acknowledge him, we own him suitably, according to the import of this name Christ.

SERMON XLI.*

1 JOHN v. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I SHALL now go on to clear the efficacy of this faith, which, if it be right and such as it ought to be, will diffuse a mighty and efficacious influence through the whole soul. It will be as a great vital spring in the heart, that sets all the wheels in motion, and acteth every faculty and power. But its next and more immediate operation must be upon the will. So doth this belief (as it were) transire, pass over from the mind into the heart, into the very centre, and therein especially and most principally the will, which is the chief thing that goes under the name of the heart in Scripture phrase. Its great effect is, that the will is proportionably framed, inclined, bowed, made to comply, according to this discovery and revelation that is made of so great and glorious an object; one in whom the soul hath so near and great a concern—"The Christ of God," as he is called. This is the representation that is made in the mind, this Jesus is the Christ. "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answers (Luke ix. 20.) "Thou art The Christ of God." Such a truth as this cannot be received aright into the soul, but it must turn the whole soul, and especially the governing faculty, the will, so as that it shall be inclined and bowed to him accordingly. For it is never to be thought that there should such a revelation be made, not only in the gospel but in the mind,

* Preached April 15, 1694.

concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, but it is in order to some further purpose. He is not so revealed, to be gazed upon, to be looked upon, but that the soul should be acted towards him and be carried towards him, according to that revelation and belief. Therefore the great effect that is wrought by such an efficacious belief, is, the will's consent that he shall be such to me, as this name (Christ) doth import: I consent to it, that he shall be Christ to my soul. And that consent takes in two things, reception and resignation. These two things I shall distinctly open to you, reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

But consider we first what is more general here. This consenting act of the will, how that is the consummation of faith; this is faith perfected. The bare assent or belief, that this is he, is inchoate faith, faith begun, faith tending to its end and perfection; but this is faith in its end. The other is faith moving towards Christ, this is faith resting in Christ. It is the acquiescence of faith by which he comes to have an in-being in the soul, and the soul hath a possession of him. He dwells in the heart by faith. It is by faith, thus considered, that he comes to dwell even in the very heart, in the centre, as the expression is, Eph. iii. 17. The soul hath possession of him, and is said to have him; "He that hath the son, hath life," as in the 12th verse of this chapter. This is the unitive act of faith, by which the soul closeth and falls in with him, as in the 20th verse of this chapter. He hath given us an understanding (there's faith in the mind, a right belief or apprehension of him) to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

There are considerable the same gradations in faith, as it relates to Christ, as there are commonly observed to be in faith as it relates to God, that is, *Credere Deum, credere Deo,* and *credere in Deum.* To believe that there is a God; to believe God speaking to us in his word, revealing this or that to us; and to believe in God or into God: to wit, to unite with him as our God, take him for our God. The same gradation is in faith as to Christ: you "believe in God, believe also in me." There is a *credere Christum, credere Christo,* and *credere in Christum.* To believe, first, that there is a Christ, in opposition to the pagan world, that never thought of any such thing. Then to believe him to be revealing himself to be he, "I am *he,*" (if ye believe not

that I am he) in opposition to the Jews, who indeed believed that there should be a Christ, that there must be a Messiah; but who did not believe that this was he. And then, again, to believe in Christ, or to believe into Christ, (as the prepositions used signify) to believe into an union with him, in opposition to the formalists, or *pseudo* Christians, the mere nominal Christians, that can believe (or say they do) against pagans, that there is or must be a Christ; or against the Jews, that this is he, but never believe into him for all that, so as to close with him, as my Christ; unite with him, admit him into my heart and soul, so as that he comes to have his throne, not only his dwelling, but his seat of government in my very will; as the will is the governing faculty in the soul, Christ is the governor, the ruler there in that seat of government. So (God knows) he is believed in but by few even of them that bear his name, and call themselves Christians. We are as much concerned to have a faith concerning this Jesus, that he is the Christ, in opposition to formalists and nominal Christians, as we are to have a faith in this matter, in opposition to Pagans and Jews: for it is all one how we perish, whether we perish under the name of Pagans, or Jews, or false Christians, that never had the power or spirit of faith in Christ in them.

And so much of this consent of faith in general. But more particularly, it carries (as I said) these two things in it, reception and resignation: reception of him, and resignation of ourselves to him. There is in that faith, that will avail us unto salvation, taking and giving at the same time, complicated with one another. When we give we take, when we take we give. When we take him, we at the same time consent that we will be his, and that he shall be ours. This constitutes the covenant between him and us. And considering that he is to be covenanted with but as a Mediator, as Mediator of the gospel, and that through him we finally and ultimately covenant with God, according to that, "ye believe in God, believe also in me:" you must believe me in your way to God. Why it is this that doth make up the entire covenant between God and us in Christ. We accept him, and God in him; we give ourselves to him, and to God through him. This is consummate faith, as you will see more, when we have (as we intend) opened further to you what it comprehends.

And that we may more clearly and distinctly apprehend that, there are several things yet more particularly to be

spoken to; to wit, to let you know that this same faith concerning Jesus as the Christ, must carry with it

1. Suitable apprehensions concerning ourselves and concerning him.

2. It includes in it some correspondent actings yet further to be considered.

3. It must be attended with some suitable qualifying adjuncts. And

4. It must be attended with some concomitant dispositions and affections that are proper hereunto.

1. It must have with it suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and him: for you see here is the most immediate transactions in this matter imaginable between us and him, when we are to accept him, and resign ourselves to him. Here must be then necessarily suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him.

(1.) Of ourselves. When one goes upon such a transaction as this with Jesus as the Christ, I must consider with myself what I am, and what my state is. And, what am I, upon my most serious and enquiring thoughts? Why,

[1.] I find myself a creature under obligation to be governed by him that made me; and who shall be further obliged hereunto, if he that made all will further be favourable to me.

[2.] I must understand myself to be a miserable creature. It is as such I must have to do with this Jesus as the Christ. An undone creature, a lost creature. I do but touch upon these things.

[3.] I must consider myself an offending creature, as one that am miserable, by my having broken laws and rules, and who that way have brought myself under guilt. A miserable creature, without the apprehension of being a guilty creature, is an insolent and proud creature. I am miserable, but I am faultless. If any should bear that sense with them, they can have nothing to do with Christ, he is nothing to them. And

[4.] I must apprehend myself to be a depraved creature, habitually depraved; destitute of any good principles, either of duty towards God, or that have any tendency to felicity for myself. And I am under the possession and power of the most pernicious, radical principles of all iniquity and injuriousness towards God; and misery to myself. So I must apprehend the state of my case when I apply myself, and when my soul moves towards this Jesus as the Christ. And

(2.) I must have suitable apprehensions of him too; here I am to consent to accept of him for mine, to resign myself to him as his. Both these, reception and resignation, do require that I should have suitable apprehensions of him; That is,

[1.] I must consider his original power over me, as he is the beginning of the creation of God; "as by him all things were made, visible and invisible," Col. i. 15, 16. As by whom God made the worlds, Heb. i. 2. As originally invested with a sovereign, governing power, which, because it was original and natural to him, can never be lost, more than the Godhead. He is the Lord my maker, whom I am to receive, and unto whom I am to resign. And,

[2.] I must consider him as a constituted Ruler. So he is as Mediator. Consider him abstractedly, as he was the eternal Son of God, so he hath a natural power of government over all. But as he is Mediator, God-man, he is a Governor too by constitution. All power is given him both in heaven and earth. The Father hath given all things into his hand. John xiii. 3. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as God hath given him," John xvii. 2. So I must apprehend and conceive of him.

[3.] I must conceive of him as a Saviour; and thereupon as a Redeemer, as a Reconciler, that was to save, by redeeming and reconciling, perishing, lost, guilty creatures, to an offended God. This is the apprehension one must have in consenting to him. And the soul that hath believed aright that this Jesus is the Christ, it will be full of this sense in this transaction: Aye, this is just such an one as I need; for I find myself miserable, I find myself lost, I find myself undone, by my having offended, and involved myself in guilt, against my sovereign, rightful, Lord. There can never be any reception of him, or resignation to him, without this. And,

[4.] He must be understood and apprehended as a vital head, replenished with spirit and holy influence: so as that all that shall come into holy union with him, shall thereby derive spirit, and life and grace and holy influence, from him; the thing which the exigency of the case so much calls for, as we are creatures so miserably depraved, and dead in trespasses and sins, disinclined to the doing and enjoying good in point of felicity. Such an one I need; and so I must consider Christ as one given to be "the head of all things to the church." Ephes. i. 22. He hath an universal political headship over all. But a vital headship

over the church (to wit, that is truly such) that is, his body, his living body. And such an one must the soul, that is treating and transacting with him, apprehend him to be even in this closure, this unitive closure; I am a most wretched, deformed, depraved creature; I believe this Jesus to be the Christ, I believe it belongs to the office of this same Christ to be the fountain and spring of life and renovating grace to poor souls that shall come into union with him: and I come unto him as such, I receive him as such, and resign myself to him as such. Every one that is in Christ is a new creature. I need to be new made throughout, new created; I am lost and undone for ever if I be not so: I come to him, unto this union with him, to be made anew throughout, according to that, 2 Cor. v. 17. and that, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He is a new plastes; we had a miserable protoplast: we have another former now, a reformer. Christ is to be formed in us, his own image is to be formed in our hearts. He himself can only form his image, and draw it upon us; and that is our business with him. And blessedness itself can never make us blessed, if we be not made new, if we be not made over again, another sort of creatures than we were before. Thus there must be in this belief (as it comprehends our reception of him and resignation to him) suitable apprehensions both of ourselves and of him in this transaction, otherwise all will turn to nothing. And again,

2. There must be suitable included acts, even in those of receiving him and resigning ourselves. First, there must be the act of trust; and, secondly, the act of subjection; otherwise we do not receive him, and resign ourselves to him, suitably to the apprehensions that are given to us of that object. When we do receive him, how do we receive him? We receive him as Christ Jesus the Lord. Col. ii. 6. You receive Christ, (that is, the name of his office, that we are to believe Jesus to be invested with,) the anointed one of God. But what is he anointed to, or what is he anointed for? To be to us both Jesus and the Lord. Jesus is a saviour, Lord is an owner and ruler. It cannot be, then, but that our receiving him, and our resigning ourselves to him, must comprehend in them

(1) Trust, an absolute trust. When we receive him, we receive him as one in whom we trust; and when we resign ourselves to him, we resign ourselves as committing ourselves, in trusting ourselves. We receive him under the pleasant notion of a Saviour, and so we resign ourselves

to him, to be saved by him, confiding in his saving mercy, encouraged by his word, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." I will cast myself upon him, without any suspicion that he will ever cast me out; he will ever be as good as his word. Who ever did venture upon him, and perish? I will throw myself into those safe arms. This is included both in receiving and resigning: for I receive him as a Saviour, as Christ Jesus; and I resign myself to him, I commit, I intrust, I can credit myself to him accordingly as such. And then,

(2.) As both these together do carry in them trust, so they carry in them subjection; there is not only committing ourselves, but there is also submitting ourselves. We commit, and submit, and subject ourselves to him at the same time: for he is received as Christ Jesus the Lord, and according as the gospel represents him. "For all the house of Israel know, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ." Acts ii. 36. This must go for a known thing all Israel over, and all the world over, wherever he comes to be revealed; "That God hath made him both Lord and Christ. And him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, (Acts v. 31,) to give repentance and remission of sins." Repentance, wherein we humble ourselves before him as a Prince, prostrate ourselves, throw ourselves down at the footstool of his throne: and remission of sins, which he gives as a Saviour. Now are all sins forgiven to you, go away and be whole, you are accepted, you are pardoned. Your scores are taken off; all things set right between him and you. God hath exalted him to be a Prince, and so he humbles you and gives repentance; and as a Saviour he forgives you. These are the acts correspondent to this twofold notion. Not that the one is any cause of the other, or signifies any thing for the obtaining of them. But these are conjunct things by divine constitution, and the exigency of the case itself. As a Prince, he humbles them to repentance; and as a Saviour, he forgives them, wipes off all scores, takes off their guilt, and sets all things right between God and them. We here must then be at once both trusting in him as a Saviour, and subjecting ourselves to him as a Prince; devoting and dedicating ourselves, so as determining henceforth not to live to ourselves; no, but to him that died for us, and rose again. This is the judgment of a soul brought under the constraint of the love of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. So that hereupon this becomes the sense of the soul, "For me to

live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 20. While I live, I have no business to do but for Christ; my gain comes to me when I die—then I gain him. In the mean time, the business of my life is Christ, to live up Christ, live up his interest, serve him as a devoted one. My life is sacred to Christ, an hallowed and devoted thing. This is receiving and resigning, as comprehending acts suitable to the state of the case to what he is, and what we are. We are not to think of receiving and resigning blindly, and in the dark, and as those that know not for what; but upon such accounts, and with such actions of heart and soul, as these committing and submitting ourselves most absolutely to him. And

3. Here must be some qualifying adjuncts of these acts of receiving and resigning, especially these two, totality and vitality. It may be, you will remember them the better for the sound's sake. But they are expressions that speak the importance of the thing more plainly than any other can that occurs to my thoughts.

(1.) There must be totality with these acts of the one part and the other, to wit, with reference to the object, and with reference to the subject. Consider the act of reception with reference to the object; we are to receive a whole Christ: consider the act of resignation with respect to the subject; and we are to resign our whole selves. Reception must be with totality, a reception of a whole Christ; resignation must be with totality, a resignation of our whole selves. To take Christ but by halves, will not do the business; to resign ourselves but by halves, will not do the business neither. To take Christ only to serve a turn, that he may save me from wrath, without renewing my nature, and bringing me into an union and communion with himself and with God through him, this will not do; neither will it do for me to resign myself, and not my whole self,—my whole soul. Will it content any one to be saved by halves, to be half saved, and half lost, if this were possible? But then,

(2.) There must be vitality as to both these, as well as totality. There must be vital reception, and vital resignation; life must accompany these acts. "He that hath the Son hath life," as it is afterwards, ver. 12, of this chapter. I must so take him and receive him, as that by a vital act of my will, I become united with him as with a living thing; for I find new life hath entered into my soul. I must so resign myself to him that life may go into that act of resig-

nation. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord as those that are alive unto God. And reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Rom. vi. 11, 13. There must be life springing in my soul towards God, and through Jesus Christ. The cold, dead indifferency and aversion towards God is gone, and with the spirit of faith a spirit of life enters. And so when I come to give myself up, it is not as a dead thing. "Offer up yourselves living sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ." Rom. xii. 1. But then,

4. There must be suitable concomitant affections, especially these two, reverence and joy.

(1.) Reverence. Whom do I receive? and to whom do I resign? The great and glorious Lord of all. Think what this name (Christ) doth import. The Christ of God, as you heard. He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. When I receive him, how great an one is now to enter my soul! This sense is now to possess it, "Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, for the king of glory is entering in." He is to come and take up his dwelling in my soul by faith, as in the 24th Psalm, latter end. It must be with a prostrate soul that I am to receive him; let the everlasting doors fly open; here is a mighty one to come, him, the Lord of Glory. Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof; I know if thou comest thou bringest life with thee, and salvation with thee to my soul. But O in how humble and reverential a posture must the soul be in this thing! And,

(2.) Joy. He is to be received and resigned unto with highest complacency; with a most complacential reception and resignation. The soul is glad things are brought to that pass between God and him. Oh, blessed be God for this day, that he hath revealed his Christ, and hath revealed him in me; and that I have found him, and in him found according to his own word, "They that find me find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." O! what a blessed day is this! How hath God signalized this day with my soul, in bringing about this union and commerce between this Christ and me!

This is believing Jesus to be the Christ. If you believe it to purpose, this is it. And pray think with yourselves; can it be any thing less than this? That faith that is short of this is both a nullity and an affront. A nullity, a vanity as to you, and an affront as to God and Christ.

To you a nullity, a vanity, a nothing: for can that faith,

that belief, signify any thing, that doth not reach its end? I pray what is the end, think you, of this revelation of Christ, that there should be such a record extant concerning this Jesus that he is the Christ? Why should it be revealed? Why should it be declared, why am I required to believe it? To be persuaded in my heart of the truth hereof? Can it be for any end, but that my soul may be brought into a vital, unitive closure with him hereupon? If it doth not effect this, it effects nothing. It is from hence my Christianity commenceth. It is but now that I become a Christian, any thing besides a name. When my soul passeth into this union with him by consent, by reception, by resignation, now I become a Christian, now I am in Christ, now the spirit of faith hath exerted its power in my soul, without which there is no believing. "We having the same spirit of faith, believe." 2 Cor. iv. 13. There can be no faith to purpose without a spirit of faith. Here doth the spirit of faith exert itself, and so it is but now that I do begin to be a Christian; for he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his, he is no Christian; let him be called what he will, let men call him what they please, he is none of Christ's. And what, will my Christianity without a Christ save me, or do me any good? To have a christless Christianity, what shall I be the better for that?

And it is indeed not only a nullity as to myself; but it is an affront and provocation to God and Christ, if in believing and assenting to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, my soul do not hereupon unite and close with him: for it is a refusing him in the face of light. It is a refusing him, when I know and profess to know who he is. I profess this Jesus to be the Christ, and yet my soul stands out against him. For I must be either a consenter or refuser. To refuse him when I know who he is, when I profess to believe who he is, this is higher wickedness than the Jews were guilty of when they crucified him; for if they had known him to be the Lord of Glory, they would not have crucified him. But I know this Jesus is the Christ, yet I will him not. "You will not come to me, that you may have life." Here is a knowing and denying at once. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father." 1 John ii. 23. But he that doth acknowledge that this Jesus is the Christ, hath the Father and the Son both together. If it be vitally acknowledged, so as that the soul pass hereby into union with both, then he hath both.

I hope we speak and hear of these things with a design to be and do accordingly, otherwise here is time the most

unhappily thrown away that could have been. We had been better treating of any trivial subject, if such a thing as this should have been spoken, or been attended to slightly, and with neglect. All lies upon this, depends upon this: all for our present comfort in this life here in this world, and our future happy blessed life in the other world.

SERMON XLII.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

AND thus, what this faith, concerning Jesus's being the Son of God, or the Christ, doth in itself import, hath been largely shown. And now,

II. What is said of such as do believe this with this faith, we are to open to you, to wit, what this being "born of God" imports. And concerning it, I shall first note to you two things in general; and then come to give you a more distinct and particular account of it afterwards. In general,

1. That this must needs be a very great difference, which such a work as this makes between men and men, this being "born of God." The difference cannot but to every one's understanding appear very great, between one that is born of God, and one that is not born of God: especially too, when you consider, that every one that is not born of God, is of the seed and offspring of the worst father that ever was. For there are but two great Fathers whose posterity divide all mankind; they that have not God for their Father, as being born of him, our Lord tells them, "You are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do." John viii. 44. "And by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." 1 John iii. 10. It hath enough in it to amaze a man's soul, to have this matter represented as a thing doubted of, and to be inquired about, To which of these Fathers do I relate? If the one of them be not my Father, the other is. This must be understood (as any ordinary understanding will easily appre-

* Preached April 22, 1694.

hend), not concerning a person's naturals, but his morals. When a man is said to be a child of the devil, it is not as if there were any thing of positive natural being wrought in him by the devil, but only a moral depravation. And so when any are the children of God, it is not that any new natural faculty is created, but the faculties that were created at first, and that are depraved, and upon which the image of the devil is impressed, are sanctified; defaced, and purged of that impurity, and stamped with an impression from the Spirit of holiness, which is the regenerating Spirit.

That is one consideration, and a mighty one it is; and very obvious, one would think, to every one's thoughts, that this must make a very vast difference between men to be born of God, and not to be born of him, and to be either of his, or of the devil's seed. And,

2. This is to be generally noted too, that this difference is universal upon all believers. The greatness of it, and universality of it, are the two things that I would have previously noted. And this latter you have expressly in the text, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Every one, without exception. So that there is no room left for such an imagination to any one, Is it not possible that some or other may pass for believers, without having this work pass upon them, so vastly differencing men from one another, as this being born of God is? A great thing indeed! What? May none pass for a believer but such as are born of God? May not in the census some or other escape without that mark upon them? No, saith the Apostle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Let him call himself whatsoever he will, he is real infidel; let him be never so much a nominal believer, if he be not born of God, his believing of this, that Jesus is the Christ, is as nothing; it is no believing. As in another case, circumcision goes for no circumcision, if it be not of the heart and spirit, and not only of the letter. As circumcision will go for no circumcision (where there is the very thing figured and represented), if it be the figure and no more, so doth such a pretended faith go for no faith (let men say never so long we believe Jesus is the Christ), if they be not born of God, they will never pass in the divine estimate for believers.

And now these two generals being noted, we must come to give you a more distinct and particular account what this being "born of God" doth import. And that we shall do

in this twofold gradation: 1st, Speaking to it as it is a birth; and, 2dly, As it is a being born of God, as it is a divine birth. As it is a being born; and as it is a being born of God. The latter whereof, as you may easily apprehend, doth greatly sublimate the former and raise it higher, and should raise our thoughts and apprehensions proportionably higher about it.

(1.) As this work done upon the soul is called a birth, let us consider it so. And that is a more general consideration, and a lower one; and as a fountain and substratum to what is afterwards to be added under the other more specifying notion. Why, as it is said to be a birth, it signifies such things as these,

[1.] A real new product in the soul, that there is somewhat really produced anew in it. This must be signified by being born. Being born is not a fiction, is not a fancy; it is not an imaginary thing. Being born signifies a real new production, that there is really somewhat new brought forth into being, that before was not; and so as to make the subject so far another thing from what before it was; or works such an imitation, as that the person in whom this work is wrought, is not what before he was. It brings the matter to this, that he may truly say, *Ego non sum ego,* I am not the same (1) that I was. As the Apostle saith of himself, 1 Tim. i. 11, "I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was injurious, but I obtained mercy." And that mercy which he had obtained, had made him quite another man. And this he doth not speak of himself as a single person separately considered, but he speaks of himself as a pattern to all that should thereafter believe; that he was taken herein as set for a pattern (as the expression is in the original) what mighty changes the power and spirit of grace could work in the souls of men, so as to make them so much other men from themselves. It is very true, indeed, that for those that hitherto continue in their natural and unregenerate state, they are not all sinners alike, they are not all sinners in the same kind. Every such sinner is not a persecutor, is not a blasphemer. But every such sinner is a carnal wretch, a stranger to God, alienated from him, unacquainted with him; one that hath no love to him, no fear of him, no delight in him, no desire to please him, no design to serve him. "No, as to what change is made in me (saith the Apostle), I am not here to speak of myself as a single person, but I am to speak of myself as a pattern, what the Almighty Spirit of divine

grace can effect upon the soul of a man, to make him quite another sort of thing from what he was." There is somewhat common to all unregenerate persons, and to all regenerate persons, wherein such a pattern may very well reach and suit every one's case. Every one that is unregenerate, is a stranger to God, unacquainted with him; one that lives as without him in the world; that hath no design to know him, or love him, or please him, or serve or glorify him. Every one that is regenerate, his dispositions are changed in all these respects. Now what is common herein, must the apostle be understood to mean himself to be, a pattern to subsequent believers; those that should come hereafter to believe. Wherever that believing is, there is this change; there is that imitation in the subject, as will speak this person to be new born. There is a new production in him, by which he is quite another sort of man from what he was. "Every one that is in Christ (as every one comes to be in him by believing,) is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17. It is the great design of our Lord Jesus Christ (as he is the restorer and repairer of the ruins of a lapsed world, and of a corrupt nature in man,) to make all things new, so far as his design takes place and succeeds. "Behold I make all things new." Rev. xxi. 5. That is my business upon which I am intent: so that there is a real new production every where, where there is faith in Christ wrought, in every such person, which makes him truly differ (and not in imagination only) from what he was, and from what others are. And again,

[2.] As this is a real production to be thus born, new born; so it is a spiritual production, in contradistinction to such productions as lie within the sphere of nature. It is an extra-natural production. For, as I told you before, this makes men differ from what they were, not in mere naturals, but morals; and so it is an extra-natural production. It doth not lie in the sphere of nature, but it lies in the sphere of grace. You may collect it to be an extra-natural production by two things: 1st, The principal seat of it; and, 2dly, The great agent that is employed herein. The prime subject of it is the mind and spirit. The great agent employed herein is our Lord Jesus Christ, as it appears to be the immediate result of believing this Jesus to be the Christ: then he is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

First. Consider the former of these; it is a work, the primary subject whereof is the mind. "Be not conformed

to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Here is a transformation to be wrought, by which men cease to be conformed to the world, to be like the world as they were. But where is the seat of this transformation? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans xii. 2; and so Ephesians iv. 22, 23. "We have not so learned Christ: if ye have heard of him, as the truth is in Jesus," that is, "to put off the old man which is corrupt by deceivable lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind." If you have heard and learned Christ, or the truth as it is in Jesus, this is the effect of it, that you "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." It is an expression that hath somewhat more of emphasis in it, than that last-mentioned expression. Transformed by the renewing of the mind, doth represent the subject not merely, not only as a knowing thing, but as an active thing; as the very action of spirit speaks activity or active vigour. And so it is not a mere contemplative knowing which belongs to the mind alone, abstractly considered; but there being spirit in that mind, that turns all that knowledge into vital principles, suitable for present actions and operations. And this is the very centre of that subject, or seat of this renovation, or transforming change. You must be renewed in this faculty, not only as it is cognitive, but as it is active; as there is a spirit suiting it for vigorous acting centering in it. Here is the seat of this renovation. This plainly speaks this to be an extra-natural production, as well as it speaks it to be a real one, as before was said.

Secondly. If we consider Christ as the ministering agent here, and as he was the prime minister of the gospel by which this work is effected and done upon souls. It did not belong to him in this capacity, as he was Christ, merely to bring forth a new natural production into the old world. It is true that belongs to him too, but under another notion, as he was the Creator of all things, things visible and invisible, things in heaven and things on earth: all were created by him and for him, to wit, if you consider him in his abstract Deity. But the name Christ is the appropriated name of his office, as he is the Mediator. Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Believing him to be Christ, that is, to be the restorer of a lapsed, perishing world, not the creator of it, as he was at the first, which belongs to him in that distinct natural capacity; but look upon him as a constituted Mediator, a restorer and repairer of fallen, ruined, perishing creatures;

look upon him so as the name Christ signifies him to be, and so he is the agent in this great work. "He that believeth him to be the Christ, is born of God." "And he that is in Christ, is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17; and again, Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Whatsoever lay within the confines and limits of nature, would do us no good, that is all but self. We are not saved by ourselves, but we are saved by grace, and not by nature, or any thing natural, as you have it in that context. How is that? Why, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Now the agency of Christ Jesus, as he is the Christ, it lies within the sphere of grace (by which it is said we are saved,) not within the sphere of nature. And therefore it is not nature that doth the business. We must look upon this as an extra-natural, supernatural production, both as it is our mind, and the very spirit which is to be the seat and subject of it; and as our Lord Jesus, even as he is the Christ, that is to be the great agent therein. But again,

[3.] As this is a birth, so we must consider it to be a total production, such an one as carries an intireness with it: for so it is too with all such productions that are properly called births. A birth is not the production of a leg, or an arm, or an eye, but it is the production of an entire human creature. And so is this work represented: it is called the putting on of a new man. I pray consider this; the words of God are weighty words, and claim to be pondered with serious and deeply considering thoughts. I beseech you, why is that change wrought in regeneration, signified by putting on of a new man? What can it signify less than this, that it must be a total change? The production carries an intireness in it. As you do not call a finger or a toe a man, but the whole fabric and frame animated by a human spirit; this is the man. Now here is an old man "put off, that was corrupt by deceivable lusts," and then a new man put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Some way or other, indeed, this renewing work lies bespread through the whole man. Therefore the apostle prayed for the Thessalonians, (1 Epistle v. 23,) that they might be sanctified throughout in their whole spirit, soul, and body; meaning by the first, the higher and nobler faculties, or, as we may call it, the upper soul. By the second, the lower soul, as it is that seat of internal sense, imagination,

appetition, passion, fancy. And then the body, according as that may in a secondary sense be said to be the seat of a sanctifying impression, the several parts of that being now more governable by a rectified mind and spirit, more useable for God, the several parts thereof being so made instruments of righteousness for the serving of God, as the expression is, Rom. vi. 19. It being evident, that where the Spirit of holiness doth obtain and take place, or where the regenerating work is really effected, men do thereupon more make it their business to govern the outward man subserviently to the inner, and the lower soul subservient to the upper; and the very parts of the body, too, subserviceable to both, that they may be instruments for the serving of God. Wherever there is more of the regenerating power and spirit of grace residing and ruling in the inner man, so much the more there will be of a severe restraint, from a divine principle. So much the more there will be of a severe restraint upon licentious, unbridled appetite: so much the more careful such will be to preserve their bodies in an useable posture for the service of God, remembering that even their bodies themselves are the outward temples of a Deity. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And every man is therefore taught and required to possess his body in sanctification and honour, remembering that even his very flesh itself hath undergone a dedication, being washed with pure water, to signify its being prest into a subserviency to the great God and the Redeemer, under the conduct and government of his Spirit. "Let us draw nigh (we that have lived at a distance, and strangers) with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, to signify, that in body and spirit we have been devoted. Heb. x. 22; agreeing with that 1 Cor. vi. latter end, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your spirit, and in your bodies, which are both his." And so by participation, and secondarily the sanctifying impression comes to obtain in that which is lowest in the nature of men. They are to be sanctified throughout, therefore this is a total production: that holy rectitude which is effected by regeneration, or this new birth, takes place in every thing belonging to the nature of man. Therefore be not so vague as to imagine, that if there be somewhat done in some one faculty, this is rege-

neration, or that this speaks a man new born. If now and then there be a right thought injected and cast in, if there be an inclination, some motion or desire; if something of convictive light be struck into a man's conscience; is this regeneration? Is this being new born? No, that makes all things new: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, all things are become new." There is a new mind, a new judgment, a new conscience, a new will, new desires, new delights, new love, new fear, every thing new. And,

[4.] This birth, as it is a birth, signifies a permanent production, an effect that is permanent, lasting, and continued. This is obvious to every one that considers the common notion of a birth: for whatsoever it is (as to essentials) that any one is (as he is born,) the same he is to be as long as he lives. Whatsoever he is by birth, as to the essentials of that being which by birth now comes to take place in this world, he is the same thing all his days. Therefore, this must be some permanent, lasting, abiding work and impression upon the soul. It is not some light subetaneous passion that is raised in a moment, and gone in a moment. There may be many such subetaneous passions raised in the souls that live under the Gospel, which vanish and come to nothing; soon raised and soon gone. A sudden thought injected, a beam of convictive light that strikes into the conscience, a pang of terror that seizeth, some sudden rapid workings of desire: O! that my sins were pardoned, O! that there were a peace between God and me! Is this being born? That signifies a work done, which lasts and continues. They that give us an account of qualities, do distinguish between these two things, *patibilis qualitas et passio.* Implying, that the latter of these, though it may be a real thing, yet it may be so sudden a thing, so soon up, so soon down, that one is capable of denomination from it no more than a man is to be known by a sudden blush in his face, or that he should grow unknown because he wants it. This is a continuing thing. He that is by this birth to be denominated to be a believer as to the great faith of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ. Is such an one born of God? Yes, as long as he is a believer he is born of God. Doth he believe to the saving of his soul? This impression, by which it is said he is born of God, it is co-extensive, it is commensurate; so that it signifies some other kind of impression than what a man can have to-day and lose to-morrow; or what may vary and alter with him (it may be) twenty times in the same day. For, do

but consider the reason of the thing: what a man is when he is born, that he is when he dies; as to essentials he is the same creature all his time.

These are things that plainly and evidently belong to this great production in the soul, even as it is signified by the name of a "birth." That is only taking in that it is a secondary birth, and such an one as whereof our Lord Jesus Christ is the author and immediate agent, and in a pre-existing subject that is changed, and influenced, and wrought upon thereby. But then,

2. There is yet a further and fuller account to be given of this effect and work upon the soul, as it is here signified to be a divine birth; or as he that is said to be a believer with this faith, that Jesus is the Christ, is not only said to be born, but said to be born of God. According to what we so expressly have by the same Apostle in his gospel, John i. 12, 13. "To as many as have received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And observe this, for it is most observable. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," so saith the text. And that other text first saith, "they that believe on his name," receiving him with such a faith as I have opened to you at large, doth signify such faith by which we truly believe Jesus is the Christ; they are the sons of God, born of God. But do you think any are the sons of God that are not born of God? Therefore, the next words immediately subjoin, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here is a divine birth immediately depending upon God. Wheresoever the spirit and power of this faith doth obtain and take place in the soul, so that if any do believe on his name and receive him as Christ, they are the sons of God; because they are born of him. Why should they not be called sons, that have the divine nature in them, resembling God's own? Theirs is not like a human geniture or birth. It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of the man, but of God. They are heaven born, an immediate divine production.

O what deep thoughts of heart doth all this claim for us! and pray let us bethink ourselves. We here meet as a Christian assembly. You see by this what a Christian is. And all will agree (no doubt,) in the common notion, a Christian is one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ. But

you see who are reckoned to believe to this purpose, such as are born thereupon another sort of creatures from what they were, and so continue as long as they live: and such as are heaven born, born of God by immediate divine operation and influence, a mighty power from God coming upon their souls, conforming them to God, addicting them to God, uniting them with God, making them to centre in God, taking them off from all this world; so as that it may appear it is not the spirit of this world that hath done this work upon them. We have not received the spirit of this world, such a spirit as unites us with the world, but the spirit that is from God, that suits us to God and to divine things, and makes us savour the things of God, take delight in them, and that attempers us more and more to that state wherein God is to be all in all with us. So as that we are dead in this world. In this sense, to be born is to die. Every one that is thus born, dies at the same time: that is, when he is born to God, and made alive to God through Jesus Christ, he is dead and crucified to the world: It becomes a despicable thing. Hereupon he can be content to stay a little while to serve God, but he cannot endure to be without God in this world. And he hopes not to be in it long neither, but to be with him immediately who is to us our all in all.

It is a great thing to be a Christian! O that it were more understood what the Christian name signifies. If Christianity be not a shadow; if it were not a design unworthy of the descent of the Son of God into this world to bestow upon men a new name, but let them be the same men under that new name, earthly, terrene, impure creatures, and strangers to God as much as ever, only called Christians, as full of carnality, as full of enmity to God and godliness, as full of distempered affections towards one another; in wrath, animosity, envy, self-design in opposition to every thing that stands in their way, ready (if it were in their power) to ruin every body that opposes their secular interest; then Christianity is a great thing. For is this godlike, is it like one born of God, "who is love!" Addictedness to a party, is that to be born of God? Do you think to be of this or that party is to be born of God? It is to be made a good man, an holy man, a lover of good men and of goodness, be his denomination or name what it will. To be born of God signifies an universalized mind and spirit, that bears some image of the Divine Infinity; not in essence, not in being, not in presence, not in power; that is im-

possible; but in aim and design, that is, that as He cannot possibly be confined any way, so I will not confine myself. To have an universalized mind and spirit, co-existent (as it were) with the creation, labouring to do all the good that is possible every where, so far as any power of mine can extend: and where no power of mine can extend, thither my desire and prayer shall extend. Such an one as is born of God is like God, ready to scatter every where divine blessings through the world. This is one born of God; that as He fills the whole earth with his goodness, so I would by all acts of benefaction, as much as lies in my compass; never limiting myself in aim or design, though my capacity do never so much limit me.

But these are things that must be enlarged on hereafter. Only let us consider now, how high a pretence it is for any man to pretend himself to be a believer, or a Christian: one that believes Jesus to be the Christ. If I should ask any one this question, Do you believe Jesus to be the Christ? And he answer me suddenly, and without consideration, Yes, I believe Jesus to be the Christ: I would not be so uncharitable as to censure any body that so answers; I would hope that he answers considerately, and as the truth of the matter is. But I would give him all the occasion I could of considering himself, and of judging himself, though I will not judge him. Pray think with yourselves what you say, when you say you believe Jesus to be the Christ; for every one that so believes is born of God, and hath that mighty universal change wrought in the very habit of his soul, that makes him imitate God, that conforms him to God, and inclines to God, and makes him value communion with God above all things in this world.

SERMON XLIII.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now, to speak more distinctly to this work as it is signified by a divine birth, or being born of God, there are two things of which we must have a distinct considera-

* Preached 29th April, 1694.

tion: First, the influence by which it is produced; and secondly, the product itself.

(1.) The influence by which it is produced. And that we must carefully distinguish from these two things: First, from what is superior to it in the kind of influence; and second, from what is inferior.

[1.] From what is superior to it, and ought to be conceived infinitely superior. And that is the influence by which the eternal Son is begotten of the Father. That cannot be called a created influence, as that which is common to this work with all other creatures must be. But it may be truly procreated, because he is said to be begotten; the only begotten Son of the Father. Begotten he is, but so begotten as none besides: not so begotten as a creature is. We shall shew you the difference by and by. But we are to consider these as infinitely different. The manner by which God is said to beget his own eternal Son, and that by which he doth beget all that are, in the sense of the text, born of him, differ: and especially in these two things lies the difference; first that the former is eternal, whereas the latter is temporary; and secondly, the former is necessary, whereas the latter is arbitrary. And pray note these two great differences. The former, I say, is

First, Eternal. He that is said to be the only begotten Son, "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." John i. 14. He is the only begotten Son in that peculiar and most noble sense, to wit, that he was begotten from eternity. So you find, Micah v. 2, "his goings forth were from everlasting; of old, and from everlasting." So that there was no moment conceivable, not only in time, but in all foregoing eternity, wherein he was not by an everlasting resultancy (as we may speak) from the Father. His goings forth were from everlasting. It is not thus as to creatures; not as to the most excellent sort of creatures, this same more noble creature, the new creature, the divine creature (being yet but a creature;) it had its beginning, and may have its very late beginning, as all creatures do begin to be at one time or other. And,

Secondly, The influence in the former is necessary; in reference to the latter, this and all other creatures are but arbitrary. Whatever is created is created by an arbitrary influence. "For thy pleasure, or by thy will (as those words, Rev. iv. 11. may be read) they are and were created." Whatsoever is created, is the product of the divine will, depends upon an

antecedent act of will, determining whether it shall be, or not be. But this could not be the case as to the eternal generation of the Son, even from thence (as it hath been said) that it was "from everlasting:" for whatsoever did depend upon an act of will, determining whether it should be or not be, that is an antecedent of will: not concomitant, but antecedent; and so whether it should be or not be, must have had a beginning, and could not be pre-existent, could not be from all eternity. Though indeed such productions may be to all eternity (as it is with the spirits and souls of men) they cannot have been from all eternity, if it depend upon choice whether they should be or not be. But the other was a generative influence, that did not depend upon choice, but necessity of nature. He was the Son by natural, necessary, eternal promanation; as necessarily the Son, as the Father the Father; he resulting from him as his everlasting substantial image. As if the sun in the firmament, instead of projecting its beams round about, did invert them, and so there were a necessary production of a sun in a sun, not depending upon choice, but from an everlasting necessity of nature; so he is said to be the only-begotten Son of the Father. Though he hath many sons, as you that are said to be begotten and born of him; but in an inferior sense, as a greater difference cannot be supposed than to be from necessity of nature, and to be from arbitrary choice, at will and pleasure. "Of his own will begat he us, to be the first fruits of his creatures:" James i. 18. he did it when he might not have done it. That is one distinction that is necessary to be made in this case, between this begetting and what is infinitely inferior to it, to wit, that of the only-begotten Son of God. But then

[2.] We are to distinguish it too from that which is unspeakably inferior to it, as well as that which is superior; that is, we are to distinguish it from the production of inferior things, that are of a lower nature and value, which though they are called God's creatures, yet are they never in any sense to be called his sons. And we must therefore consider the special kind and nature of this productive influence in this respect, as it is to be distinguished from all that which is merely creative, and not generative at all. It is true, indeed, that the generative influence is creative too within the universe of created beings, so as that God's children as such are his creatures; for they are called new creatures. But though all his children are his creatures, yet all his creatures are not his children. There is somewhat

peculiar not only in respect of the thing produced, but in respect of the productive influence too. And so we must note to you these differences:

First, That this influence is spiritual, I say; it is purely spiritual. It is called so, both in respect of the cause and of the effect. As it is from the cause, and as it terminates in the effect, so we are given to understand that it is spiritual; it hath the name of Spirit put upon it, John iii. 6, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." There is Spirit producing, and spirit produced thereby. The influential cause, as such, is the divine Spirit, (for we consider now the spirituality of the influence, not of the thing produced thereby.) "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, (or the Holy Ghost,) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not enough (as if he should have said) that a man be baptized; that will not do the business, that may leave him short of regeneration, of heaven, and the kingdom of God. It is spoken by way of allusion to the Jewish baptisms that were before the Christian institution; for there were two sorts of proselytes among the Jews (long before Christianity under that name came to obtain in the world;) those that were called proselytes of the gate, and those that were called proselytes of justice. And for the latter sort, they were always admitted into the Jewish church by baptism; and therefore doth our Saviour justly upbraid it to Nicodemus, that he being a master in Israel, should understand so little of the mysteries of regeneration. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Dost thou not understand the meaning of an usage so common among yourselves? For at those baptisms they used to have a new father and a new mother, new kindred, new brethren, new sisters, declaratively. This was a thing wont to be declared in the solemnity of those baptisms, as their own records inform. Now, saith our Saviour, dost thou think this thing, so used among yourselves, had no meaning? Art thou a master in Israel, one of the teachers and doctors, and dost not understand this thing; that besides the external, significant baptism, there must be a signified internal baptism? And what could that be but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, renewing the nature, transforming the soul, altering the habitual inclination, creating a new man, a new divine creature? So that it must be a mighty penetrative, spiritual influence, full of vital life and vigour diffused through the soul, that makes this birth, when one is said to be born of God. There is a spiritual production, and it is of Spirit. That which is

born of the Spirit is spirit: under that notion, and as such we conceive it in relation to action, it speaks a mighty vigour, and vivacity, and operativeness. For matter, as matter can effect nothing, work nothing, it hath no operativeness, no *vis*, no energy in it, it is a mere passive thing; but the fountain of all activity, life, and vigour, is Spirit, a spiritual being; and the generative influence in this work is such.

Secondly, It is intellectual as well as spiritual; such as carries mental light in it. For when God doth this work upon souls, he is said to shine into them. God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ." He doth this work as the Father of lights. "Every good gift and perfect giving proceeds from the Father of lights." James i. 17. Even as it is such; whereupon (as we shall in the proper place come to note to you) these children are called "children of light," as he is the "Father of lights." And whereas the thing produced is the divine image, this is to be renewed in knowledge, or "they are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them." Col. iii. 10. After the image of their Creator, who is the fountain of all knowledge and wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are originally and essentially in God, and communicatively and derivatively in Christ, they are all hid in him. And so there is a derivation even in this work, unto the effect produced; and therefore it must be considered in the productive influence. Here is a radiation of light into the soul. He hath "called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." The light of divine truth, by which these great things that do concern us Godward are revealed which were all his before. Therefore as to the manner of the production, or the productive influence, these are said to be "born of God." These children of God are said to be born of divine truth; which is that light which shines into the soul, exhibiting to us such things, not as will satisfy curiosity, but necessity—answer the necessary purposes of our souls. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be to him the first-fruits of his creatures." And, 1 Pet. i. 23, "Being born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," divine truth: "seeing you have purified your souls (as it is said before) in obeying the truth." They had received that truth which carried with it a transforming power, by which they became subdued thereunto, and were made to receive the impression thereof, according to that of our Saviour, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. "And we

give thanks alway to God for you, (saith the Apostle to the Thessalonians) that God hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. So that divine truth and light is the immortal seed out of which this divine production springs in the soul. The productive influence is illuminative; divine truth, in the light and lustre and glory of it, being darted into the very heart, hath made light to shine in to the heart, even the light of the knowledge of God's own glory. 2 Cor. iv. 6. And again,

Thirdly, It is a powerful influence which is productive of this blessed work. It is true, that whatsoever work is done by God is done by an omnipotent agent, but not always as such; for we must not look upon him as a merely natural or involuntary agent, that doth in every thing what he can; as the fire burns all that it can, and the sun shines as much as it can. The case is not so in the matter of divine agency; but he doth exert more or less of his power as it seems him good, and as the matter doth require. It is power, being under the regulation of his wisdom and his will in every thing he doth; for it would be very unreasonable and absurd to think there should be the same emission of divine power and virtue in the production of a worm as in the production of an angel. Therefore, the almightiness of his power he attempers and proportioneth, by his wisdom and choice, to the effect to be produced. But there is a mighty exertion of power in this work, when he begins the new creature; when he is not only to bring a thing out of nothing, but, (which requires a greater exertion of power) he is to bring a contrary out of its contrary, light out of darkness, holiness out of the greatest impurity, love to himself out of the highest enmity. This is a mighty egression of divine power: when there are but additions to be made in this kind in the soul, we find what it requires by what is prayed for. "We pray for you, (saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 16,) that God would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man;" and that he will do so "according to the riches of his glory:" implying that there must be a mighty exertion of the glory of the divine power, in order to an additional work, in order to the superadding some further degree unto what hath been wrought powerfully already; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you." And the expressions are of equal import, to the same purpose, which we have, Col. i. 11. The apostle there prays for the Colossians, that

in order to their walking worthy of the Lord to all well pleasing, and in order to their being fruitful in every good work, and in order to their increasing in the knowledge of God, to wit, their religion (that being a periphrastical expression thereof, the knowledge of God being a periphrasis of whole Christianity) that they may be "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power." There needed a continual exertion of all might, and such as should accord to and agree with the glorious power of God himself, in order to their progress and increase of grace and holiness: and therefore much more must the first beginning of such a work as this in the soul require a very glorious exertion of divine power.

And whereas therefore in this work there is a communication and participation of the divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power. If you look to 2 Pet. i. verses 3, 4, compared, "According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means; to wit, by the great and precious promises given us in the gospel. But it must be by the exertion too of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, "according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness," or to the godly life; in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these "exceeding great and precious promises," is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature, a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life; this nature is now to be attempered to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of Almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take? He gives "exceeding great and precious promises," and in them he

declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us? Truly grace in us is goodwill towards God, or good nature towards God; which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a transforming power. But how doth he make it so? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts; I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me? I am full of good will towards you, will you requite it with perpetual ill will, and everlasting enmity towards me? Thus the "exceeding great and precious promises" are instruments to the communicating a divine nature to us, though that divine nature be ingenerated by a mighty power. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter, by the exertion of Almighty power; but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his mind, and kind design, and good will, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the gospel.

And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the gospel, to work upon souls by. But the gospel is the word of his grace. "To testify the gospel of the grace of God," that is my business, saith the apostle, as a minister of Christ, and for which he did not reckon his life too valuable or too costly a thing to be sacrificed; "That I may testify the gospel of the grace of God, my life is not dear to me." Acts xx. 24. I can be contented to throw away an hundred such lives as this, in testifying the gospel of the grace of God. But what was it to be testified for? That God by this testimony might insinuate into so ill-natured hearts and spirits, and set them right towards him; plead effectually with them, and expostulate the matter. Why should you be everlasting strangers to me, who mean nothing but kindness and good will towards you? Why should you choose to live as without me in the world? Why should you be always alienated from the life of God, when he is seeking after you, and would impart his grace and glory to you? It is in this way, and by such means, that the divine power works, in order to the production of a divine nature; a nature that will incline towards God, work towards him, as it carried men away from him before. And then,

Fourthly, The influence by which this work is done, it is a merciful, compassionate influence; an influence of grace exerted and put forth, with the height of divine pity towards miserable creatures that must be lost and undone; being liable to an eternal hell, and who are a present hell to themselves, till such a work as this be done in them. For though, alas, such poor creatures will not consider it themselves, God doth consider with compassion the horrid, forlorn state of unrenewed souls: where his regenerating influence as yet hath had no place or effect, they are not only liable to eternal wrath (whereupon they are said to be by nature the children of wrath) by the inclinations and propensions of their own vicious nature, that hath set them at enmity with God, at enmity with one another, and set them at enmity with themselves. They are not only, I say, liable to eternal wrath by the inclination of their own nature, to which that tends to carry them, and to which it suits them; but they are a present hell to themselves, as every unrenewed soul is. If you consider the constituent parts of hell, loss and torment; loss of the best good, torment by the worst evil; there are both these in kind in this present state, though they are both higher in degree hereafter. But in kind, both do fall into the present state of an unregenerate soul.

i. The misery of loss. They are without God in the world: Ephes. ii. 12. "without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." They do not reflect upon this; but if occasion were given them to consider the state of their case, and they would truly consider it, whatsoever their straits and necessities are, they must needs say,—I do not know which way in the world to turn myself; I have no God to go to, none to whom mine heart inclines, none in whom I can justly pretend myself to have a present interest; I must bear all my burdens alone; in the midst of my wants I have no God; in the midst of my enjoyments I have no God; no God to supply my wants, no God to sweeten my enjoyments. This is their forlorn case. And if

ii. You look to the misery of torment, which is the other constituent part of hell, there must be that in degree in every unrenewed soul. And so they have the same misery in kind that they shall have hereafter, for all degrees are comprehended in the kind. And therefore the lowest degree speaks the true kind, the same kind. Some degrees they have of it now, even of that torment which belongs to

the present state, that of an unrenewed soul as such; for, being unreconciled to God, they are not capable of being reconciled to themselves; that is, the power and faculties of their souls with one another; but light prompts them one way, and inclination carries them another way. It is true there is somewhat of this warring in the regenerate too; but then the prevailing principle doth agree with their light; the prevailing principle in their hearts doth agree with the light in their minds, and is the victorious principle. There is a disposition to contend against light; but the holy gracious principle there doth ordinarily and habitually prevail against the corrupt and sinful principle. But the case is quite otherwise with unregenerate souls; to wit, in the stated course and current of their lives, they run counter to the judgment of their consciences; as no man's conscience but must condemn an ungodly life, living as "without God in the world;" but so they live their lives, and transact the whole course and current of their lives at that ungodly rate, without fear of God, without the love of God, without praying to him, without depending on him, without designing for him in a continued course. Why here is the self-tormenting principle laid asleep only in such souls; that is, if ever they should reflect, they must consider themselves in a state of war with God, and with their own consciences, which are God's vicegerents, and are to govern over them in his right. If conscience were awake, and would do its office, that self-tormenting principle would presently and repeatedly tell them, Thou art a rebel against God and me; thou dost what thy light condemns thee for; God is cast out of thy soul, thy thoughts, thy affections, thy mind and heart: thy life is a continual war and rebellion against Heaven. It is true, instead of mortifying their corruptions, they make a shift to mortify their consciences, and so they are not clamorous, nor do give them actual torment; but the tormenting principle is there, and needs only awakening, and will awaken sooner or later, too late, if God be not merciful. But because he is merciful, therefore is such a transaction set on foot between him and them. And it is a compassionate influence suited to the sad and forlorn case wherein men are liable to hell, and are a present hell to themselves. It is a merciful influence which is vouchsafed in such a case.

Do but look back to the 2d Ephesians, where men are said to be "children of wrath by nature," one as well as

another; it is immediately subjoined in the next words, "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ;" hath inspired us with a new life, a divine and holy life, which is another expression of the same thing signified by "the divine nature." This is an influence in which grace breathes, in which mercy governs. "God, who is rich in mercy," hath saved us by quickening us together in Christ, infusing a new divine life into us, which will be eternal life, as certainly as a vicious, corrupted, depraved nature, continuing unrenewed and what it was, will end in eternal death. So that as they are children of wrath, and sinners of hell by that very nature, so, by this divine nature now imparted by God's rich mercy, there is a sacred and sure pledge of life eternal, wherein that will end. And to the same purpose is Tit. iii. ver. 3, 4, 5. The apostle speaks of what naturally we all were; "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice, hateful, and hating one another: but after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This then is a most merciful influence that is given forth in the regenerating work. It is as if God should have said, I see these poor creatures are perishing, not only tending to hell, but carrying with them their own hell into hell, "hell being at last cast into hell," (as the expression in the Revelation is.) It is a throwing hell into hell, when a wicked man comes to hell; for he was his own hell before. God beholding this forlorn case of wretched creatures, saith, I must either renew them or loose them; I must either transform them, or they must perish; they are in fire of hell already. Such and such we were, but of his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Ghost. O! the compassionate influence that is shed upon a soul in this case! The balmy dews that descend from Heaven upon a distempered soul, which quench the flames of lust, and which implant and invigorate (after their implantation) a divine principle, in-create a new life, that leads to God and Christ, and the way of holiness and heaven at last. This "being born of God" must imply, if we consider the productive influence by which this blessed work is effected. We are afterwards

to consider the effect itself produced: in general God's own image inwrought into the soul, which we must understand by an influence, or exerted virtue, suitable to the thing to be produced, as well as suitable to the productive cause.

SERMON XLIV.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

And now, besides the peculiarity that appears in the productive influence, we are to shew you what peculiarities there are in the thing produced. It is the divine image itself, the permanent divine image. The influence is transient by which the effect is wrought, not only as it doth *transire* from God, but as it doth pass into the effect which it doth leave behind it. It doth *relinquere post se opus*, it leaves behind it a work wrought and done; and the work wrought and done hath a fixed permanent divine signature or impress upon it, by which it may be seen this is a divine production. Here are such resemblances of God in this work now done, that it may be plainly seen here is one born of God, or there is somewhat born of God in this soul, or in this person, as the matter is most emphatically expressed, to wit, in the neuter gender, afterwards in this very chapter, "Whatsoever is born of God," the thing born of God; to signify to us, that it is not the person as such (for then Nicodemus's question could not have been answered, "How shall a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?) But there is something done in the person which is a divine product in this work. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." The same thing that is signified before in this same epistle "by the divine seed," permanent and remaining in such an one, chap. iii. 8. Whence it is that he cannot commit sin, that is, as such he cannot, as such he never can commit it; be a doer of it in a con-

* Preached May 13, 1694.

tinual course, as such it is impossible he should. The seed remaining, inhibits, withholds him from it. Here now our thoughts are to stay and take up in contemplating this fixed, permanent, divine image, that comes into the soul by this productive influence in regeneration, or when a person is said to be born of God.

And for this now you must know, that two things do concur and meet in this work, when it comes to be entered into its fixed state, passing from the *fieri* to be *facto esse;* that is, from its being adoing, and its being actually and fully done. Two things, I say, must be considered as concurring; to wit, first, the working out of a former image, and, secondly, the introducing and working in of this. The working out a former: it is in the sphere of grace, as it is in the sphere of nature, that *generatio unius* is *corruptio alterius*. The introducing of a new form is the expulsion of an old; the putting on of a new man is necessarily accompanied with, and led on by "the putting off the old man, which is corrupt by deceivable lusts." But when we consider what the former image was, that is to be abolished and razed out, that will very much make way for the more full and distinct understanding what sort of image it is that must intervene and be introduced. And for that reason it will be requisite to say somewhat to that too.

And we may easily apprehend, if we do but reflect in our own thoughts, the two terms between which the soul of man doth move from the one to the other. The soul in its state of apostasy from God, there were somewhat or other when it left him, which it made defection to. And so in its return to God, there is somewhat it goes off from, when it comes into a state of union with him. And according as the terms are of recess and approach, so the *exemplaria* are, the exemplars, according to which the soul is formed and moulded; for it will bear the image of that which it doth converse with, and most converse with. The two terms between which it was always divided were, this world and God; the inferior creature and created good on the one hand, and the supreme and uncreated good on the other hand. Here is an impress or image of the former to be abolished, when the image of the latter is to be introduced. The soul did adhere to this world as its only best good, before regeneration; there was hereupon a worldly image on it; that is to be abolished, it is to return to God; and by regeneration therefore, must be suited to God, and so have a divine image impressed upon it in order thereupon.

These are the two terms between which the motions of the soul are, this world and God; when it left God, it betook itself to this world; when it returns to God, it leads and comes off from the world, and accordingly are the images which successively obtain and take place in it. Therefore you have that strict interdict upon all them that would make a tender of themselves to God in order to which that great work of being renewed in the spirit of their minds must pass upon them. "Be not conformed to this world," Rom. xii. 2. Here is a tender to be made of ourselves to God, not as a dead thing, but as living; we are made alive in the work of regeneration, of which he there speaks, "be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," or "transformed in the renewing of your minds." But here is a foregoing form that they must be divested of, "be not conformed to this world" if you pretend to God, if you will be for him; if you offer yourselves to him as "a living sacrifice, be not conformed to this world;" that is an inconsistency to offer to God a mundane thing, a worldly thing, that which carries the impress of this world upon it; you offer to him an abomination, that which he must abhor—you offer him a sacrifice that smells of impure earth, that hath (as it were) the reake of a dunghill:—what, will you offer that to him? No; "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God," as there it followeth. This is a great thing; and we do nothing in considering either the work of believing in Christ as the Messiah, or in considering, much less in experiencing, the work of regeneration which is conjunct therewith, if we understand not what it is to come off from this world, and to have the worldly image and impress abolished and defaced in us, so as that it shall not be a prevailing thing, a regnant thing any longer. And to this purpose you must know that the image which we are to bear, or which we have borne, it is not superficial only, it is not an outside thing; but if we have the image of this earth upon us, we have it in our very souls, the world is set in our hearts, it is in us another nature, a worldly and terrene nature; that is it wherein the image lies; not in an outside, but we are in spirit, and in our very natures, contempered to this world. We read therefore of a spirit, and a spirit opposite to one another in this matter. As there are those two terms between which the motion of the soul lies, so there are two motive-principles, and each of them called spirit, the spirit which is of this

world, and the Spirit which is of God: it is this spirit that operates either to work the one image or the other. The spirit of this world, that forms us to the world; the Spirit of God forms us to God, and suits us to his communion and converse. You find, 1 Cor. ii. 12, that so the state of the case is represented, that a contest is continually kept up, and will be kept up by the Spirit of God against the spirit of this world; and is kept up till there be an overcoming by the spirit of this world against the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God. It is not a mundane spirit; that spirit that now comes upon us is another spirit, and is to work out the former impress, and introduce a new one. And so is the case again stated in the fourth chapter of this epistle, at verse 4, that the spirit that is in this world and the Spirit which is from God are engaged, as it were, in a war one against the other; "Little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the world: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world:" and he that is the greater, he that is in you, is to work out the former worldly impress and to introduce the new one; and he will do so in all that are regenerate. And therefore, these two things in reference to this worldly spirit and image must be understood to be done; and pray consider it, for it concerns the souls of us all.

First, There must be an opposition by the divine Spirit unto the spirit of this world, the worldly genius, so as thereby gradually more to work and wear off the worldly impress from such a soul. You see there is a war, an opposition; "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The spirit that works in this world doth lift up itself; but there is a greater power that is exerted and put forth; he speaks of a contest that is between spirit and spirit. "Hereby ye know the Spirit of God;" and by a contrary character it is implied we are to discern and distinguish the spirit of this world; but these as militating and warring one against another. In short, this is the matter of contest, God would have our hearts and souls, this world it would retain them which before had them; and this is the case with every one of us, every one that hears in this assembly; either this world hath your hearts, or God hath them. Where the Spirit of God comes to work (and it worketh by the gospel of his Son) the great design of its striving and working is to draw off the hearts and souls of men from this world, that they may be united to himself; and in order thereunto, to work out the worldly image, their likeness to this world and

their conformity to it. They that are of this world bear its impress; and nothing is gustful and savoury to them but what is worldly and terrene. As God makes his own way, he introduceth a new savour of things; as they are made less like to this world, and more like to God, accordingly they do less savour the things of this world, and do more savour the things of God. They are emphatical expressions you find to this purpose in some passages of scripture, which you do well to compare with one another. In ch. iv. v. 6, of this epistle you will see how men are distinguished; there is one sort of whom it is said, "We are of God," born of God, regenerated ones (as you have heard that passage is sometimes contracted.) We are of God: well, but how doth that appear? "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." And hereby it is that spirits are distinguished, which spirit is regular; they that are regenerate are of God, and then they hear the things of God, the word of God, with gust, with savour and relish; it is according to the image, the impress, they have upon them; if they be like this world they can savour nothing else but the things of the world. "They that are of the world, speak of the world, and the world heareth them," as at verse 5, of this chapter. Worldly minded men can discourse with one another of the things of the world all the day long with gust and relish, and never be weary: but the things of God they have no relish, no savour of. Therefore there is a diverse impression upon the mind and spirit of the one and of the other. To the same purpose is that John viii. 43, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" saith our Saviour, "even because ye cannot hear my words." You cannot hear them; there is another gust and relish of things with you; they cannot enter into you, as he saith a little before in the same chapter: "My word hath no place in you." There is no likeness, no similitude or agreement between the impression, influence and tenour of my words and your minds; your minds disagree, are otherwise impressed and otherwise tinctured. So in verse 47 of the same chapter, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." You have nothing divine in you, nothing of the distinguishing work, therefore you cannot hear the words of God. This is one thing concerning this image to be abolished, to wit, there must be an opposition to it wherever the contrary image is to be introduced. And,

Secondly, There must be a victory over it, to which that

opposition tends; and it is to no purpose if it have not that glorious end, if it do not end in this. Indeed there may be strivings that have a worse end, as in that 2 Pet. ii. 20; some that do escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [oh, sad word] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (in a degree) who are again entangled therein, and overcome, and their end is worse than their beginning: But this regenerating work doth effect and bring about actual victory over this world and its spirit, so as to disentangle a man's heart from it. And pray observe to this purpose what you have in the context where the text lies, that, as in this verse, you hear what is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" so it is also told us at verse 4, that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And that he might give to understand that he speaks consistently with himself, pursuantly to his design in verse 5, he adds, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" He that hath this faith in him is a conqueror over this world; if it be this faith indeed, not the name, not the show, not the mock show of it only. And let this now be gladly thought of, "He that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God; he that is born of God overcometh the world;" first taking this sound and sense of it, that is, that whoever is born of God, is by the new birth become so noble, so raised, and so altered a creature, that he can be no longer a slave to this world only. What, are the sons of God, his children, to be slaves? If they are born of him, he is their father, and they are his sons. What more monstrous absurdity can be conceived, than that a son of God, and born of God by a divine birth, should be held afterwards to so base a thing as this world is? What, do you think that the sons of God are to be in a state of slavery? No; so soon as they are born they conquer, they overcome. That is, the divine principle in them is a victorious principle. And so the other image (though there be fragments of it) is not intire, it is broken, and there can be but fragments. It is not the spirit of this world that is reigning and governing, but another spirit: and hereupon this is observable in the very complexion of their spirits, they can use the things of this world as other men do, but they do not entirely enjoy them, so as to rest in them, or to get their rest from them; but their tendency is higher; they in the most true sense possible possess them, but are not possessed by them; they are proprietors in the

truest sense of the things of this world, to wit, by a restored right from God; he hath renewed their right, hath given them a right that was forfeited and lost; and so are they in a true sense owners of what portion he allows them in this world; under him they are owners and possessors; they do possess, but are not possessed: other men, unregenerate men, do not; they do not so truly and properly possess this world as they are possessed by it; those that are ignorant, are lords and masters of it; but for great men, that is master of them, they are slaves to it; worldly desires, worldly inclinations, worldly interests, worldly designs engross them, and swallow them up; they are ingulfed of this world, and possessed by it; they have not a power over it, but it hath a power over them. See what a spirit of liberty as to this the apostle describes, 1 Cor. vi. 12; "All things are lawful unto me," (speaking of such things as he refers to, the lawful use of the creatures) any thing to which I have an inclination; this or that sort of creature that I have need of, I may lawfully enjoy them: but nothing hath that power over me that I cannot distinguish between expedient and inexpedient; but I may covet too much of that which is in itself simply a lawful thing, and so turn it into unlawful. And how doth he expound it? why, thus—that he kept himself from being under the power of any thing—"all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." And even among these things it is that he resolved he would be under the power of nothing. Here is the difference in reference to the state of the two, between the regenerate and unregenerate, and that with relation to this world. Whatsoever the unregenerate man's heart is set upon in this world, it hath him under its power; it hath power over him, so that he shapes and grounds his course accordingly; doth not consider whether he shall walk by rule or not by rule, whether he shall please God or displease him, but only considers, shall I please myself? or is this a thing which I find suitable to my purpose? will it serve my end? I find it will be grateful, will it be otherwise serviceable to me? And so are the questions determined; all disputes end and are decided in this manner: and so this world hath him continually under its power. They are lords and masters of nothing of it; though every thing that is grateful and most suitable to them is master of them, and hath the power over them. But whatsoever "is born of God overcometh the world," brings it under, prevails, and tramples over worldly inclinations; that is, the divine and heavenly principle, so far as it does obtain,

is a victor. It is a hero, a divine birth that is produced. It was said of that great hero among the pagans (Hercules) that in his cradle, he strangled two serpents. They are the things of this world that the old serpent tempts by, and preys upon the souls of men to their destruction. But one that is born of God overcomes. When the regenerating principle takes place, it makes the slave a victor; he that was a slave to this world before, is now a conqueror. There is then a worldly image wrought out, that was in-wrought by the spirit of the world, and maintained till the work of regeneration be found to take place; and then is the divine image introduced: which is the next thing here to speak of, and to shew the resemblance of God in that which will appear in many particulars hereafter to be mentioned.

Only methinks upon what hath been said, this should be considered: A believer as to this truth, Jesus is the Christ, is one born of God. Methinks it should make every one lay his hand upon his heart, and say, Will I now adventure to call myself a believer, to avow and profess myself I am one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ? Take heed of compounding together inconsistencies. We shall compound together perfect inconsistencies if we do but admit the notion into our minds of an unregenerate believer? An unregenerate believer? To say so is to speak falsely, to say that which overthrows itself. There can be no such thing as an unregenerate believer, otherwise than in sound. You compound together impossibilities, incompossibilities, things that cannot consist. Every one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God. Upon the whole then, it is a great assuming to say, I am a believer: yes, it is a great assuming. It is a great thing for any one to say so. God forbid but that there should be many, that many may hourly say so. But they that say so, say a great thing; and they had need weigh and consider what they say when they say this, I am a believer; for in this same breath you say (or imply it, whether you say it or no) I am born of God, I am a heaven-born creature, I am of a divine original, I am of God, because stampt with his image, and governed by the Holy Ghost. Either blot this text out of the Bible, or own the truth of this, that it is a great assuming to say, I believe Jesus to be the Christ. Do you say, I believe so. I pray thou thinkest with the next thought, am I born of God? Do I find the springings of divine life in me? Do I find the worldly spirit abolished, vain self brought under in

me? I say again, either blot this text out of the Bible, or own it a mighty thing to say thou believest Jesus to be the Christ; for to say that, is to say, I am a divine and heaven-born creature. And if it be not to say that, Christianity is the greatest fable in the world. It is to no purpose to believe Jesus to be the Christ, if this be not the effect of it, that God have thereby a regenerate seed raised out of this world, and fitted for him, to serve him in this world, and enjoy him in the next world.

SERMON XLV.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now to proceed to the second part, the product of itself, which is much more a distinguishing work, and that whereof he himself is the exemplar and pattern, as well as the author. He is not only the efficient but the exemplary cause of it; for this divine product is not only a new creature, but it is a creature formed for God. As it is a creature, it must be made by him; for there is but one Creator; but it is not only of him, but after him; a creature made after God's image, that carries his resemblance in it. And for opening of this we proposed to shew you, that there is in this work a suitableness to God. Whether, 1st, you do consider the productive influence; or whether, 2d, you consider the effect produced. We shewed that it cannot but be (as to the productive influence) most peculiarly god-like in several respects. Though here also we distinguished it from the eternal generation of the only-begotten Son of God, as it was necessary we should. But we told you in what respects the influence is peculiarly divine by which the work is done. And then,

(2.) We mean to shew, that there is suitableness to God in the thing produced. The influence is transient, the effect is permanent; and then shew there must be a permanent abiding influence of God upon that soul that is regenerate and born of him.

* Preached May 20, 1694.

And whereas this word (as you see) expressed by being born, it therefore necessarily enforceth relation (as the latter part of this text speaks) between him that begat, and them that are begotten of him. There is paternity and filiation, fatherhood and sonship. He becoming hereupon a father to them and they children to him, for the relation is mutual, as it cannot but be. And you see it is supposed in the close of the second chapter, and beginning of the third chapter, of this epistle. Every one that is righteous is born of him, so the second chapter ends; and thereupon doth the third chapter begin thus, "Behold, what manner of love is this that the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" Upon their being begotten of him, he is a father to them, and they are sons and children to him. So the matter is more definitely explained, 2 Cor. vi. last: "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Why, now upon this must be a suitableness to God in this product itself.

1st. He is a father to them; and, 2d, As they are children to him. Then with such things in the frame and constitution (as I may speak) that corresponds to God as having been their father, and that corresponds to their being his children. And you plainly see afterwards, that these things are widely different, according as paternity and filiation are different; they are not the same relation, though they are both a resemblance of each other.

[1.] You must therefore expect to find in them that are born of God several things suitable to him, as he is a father to them, or (as the latter part of the verse expresseth it) as it is he that begat them, hath propagated, and communicated a certain divine nature to them, 2 Pet. i. 4. And these things are not to be considered with neglect, for eternity depends upon it. According as there is a real god-like communication unto souls in this world, so they are to be disposed of in the other world. The thing speaks itself. This is not a new and singular notion; but common to all Christians, of whatsoever denomination and persuasion, as it is most expressly in the word of truth, that without being thus born, born of God, born of the Spirit, there is no entering into, no seeing of the kingdom of God, John iii. 3, 6. And you have it under the eternal seal of our Lord's amen, four times affixed in those two verses. I say unto you, He that is the Amen hath given it under that seal, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into (he cannot so much

as see) the kingdom of God." Therefore we had need to take heed how we hear such matters of such weight and importance as this. God is not trifling with us when he sends to deal with us in the ministry of his word. Consider then wherein the divine character is imprest suitable to God as a father must appear in them that are born of him. And as that which is most fundamental,

First, There is a resemblance of God in this divine product, in a refined spirituality: in such a spirituality as by which the soul is refined from the sinful prevailing carnality of mind that is common universally to the unregenerate world. It is plain concerning the generality of unregenerate men, that their minds are habitually carnal, and a carnal mind doth actually govern their lives and hearts, and influence all their actions and designs. It is quite otherwise with them that are born of God. You are now here to consider,

i. That this similitude to God is not corporal, which was the vague and gross notion of the Anthropomorphites of old; they understood that there must be in man a likeness to God, they imagined God to be in an human shape; and so that men are made therefore like unto that, and must be made more and more like; and so they did not make him a model to us, but made us a model to him; instead of having made us like God, they made God altogether like themselves. Nor

ii. Doth this similitude to God in this respect stand on the other hand, in being exempt from having any body at all, or any corporeity. It is not in that we are to resemble God. That is the opposite doctrine of them who of old denied the resurrection of the body; as if that must be too mean a state to have a part after, any body at all; and so we should never be perfectly like God till we were perfectly free from having corporeity about us. Nor again,

iii. Doth it stand in having a spirit in us? for that is not distinguishing thing, so have all the sons of men. As the regenerate have all of them flesh, so have the unregenerate, every one of them a spirit in the natural sense. But

iv. This similitude doth stand in reference to this thing, in having the spirit exalted into dominion, a regency, a governing power. Whereas in the unregenerate world it is the fleshly principle that governs every where. They have a spirit in them, but that spirit is a slave to the flesh, made to serve divers lusts and pleasures. That is all the business in which men do generally employ that intellectual

spiritual being that is in them; a reasonable, immortal spirit is used in serving and making provision for this flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. And because the fleshly principle is the governing principle in the generality of men, therefore they are called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Their very minds are said to be carnalized, vainly puft up with a fleshly mind, Col. ii. 18. Their very minds and consciences are impure, tinctured with the vain tincture of carnality upon it, Tit. i. 15. This is the great thing then to be effected by regeneration, or in this divine birth; God doth in compassion to the work of his own hands, to the spirit which he hath made, restore it out of that state of base servitude wherein it was. It was a servant to base lusts and pleasures. Tit. iii. 3, 4. But when the kindness and love of God towards man appeared, according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Whereby it is that he exalts this sunk, depressed spirit, that was immersed in flesh, buried in flesh, where it should but dwell. Flesh should have been its mansion, but it became and was made its grave, its dormitory. But by regeneration this spirit is raised into dominion; it is the spirit that is fetched out of the grave, and made a governing thing over the flesh, over all natural appetites and desires. That is the product in the work of regeneration, this is the thing produced and brought forth. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." John iii. 6. Signifying that the spirit of a man, whilst it remains a servant and slave to natural inclinations, hath even forfeited its name; it is no more worthy to be called spirit.

The denomination is taken from what is prevailing and governing. If the natural principle do prevail, this compound now is called nothing but flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But when the spiritual principle is revived and authorized, made the governing principle of the man, it then regains its name, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

For that it signifies nothing unto that conformity to God, which being born of him doth import, that there is such a thing as a natural spirit in man, when that natural spirit doth not do its office, or retain its state, doth not keep the throne, but is become basely and meanly servile. And the tragedy is so much the greater in this respect, and the more deplorable, by how much the less apprehensive and sensible the unregenerate soul is of the state of its own case. By how

the more excellent and noble powers it hath belonging to it, it is so much the more fearful spectacle to behold and look upon, to see it inslaved to sense, and brought into the state of so vile a depression, and is become so mean and abject a thing. As the son of a prince captured in his infancy, and made a base drudge, he is so much the more a deplorable thing, by how much the more his spirit is depressed and sunk into that state into which he is brought; so as that he likes his servitude, his spirit is grown hard, (perfectly perhaps) ignorant of his true original. So it is with the souls of men generally; they are unapprehensive of their own original excellency and dignity, and are content to serve and be voluntary slaves to divers lusts and pleasures, till regenerating grace be vouchsafed. But now it becomes a godlike thing again. When, however, it dwells in flesh, that flesh is not a sepulchre to it as before, but a mansion; here it dwells still, but here it governs, governs over that, and is itself immediately subject to God. That is the thing wherein similitude to God consists, and which must be found in every one that is born of him, a governing, prevailing spirituality, so as that the soul is alone made like itself, and like God; it is made like one and the other all over, like what it once was, and like him from whom it was. But there is in others a spirit too, but ingulfed and swallowed up in a regnant, prevailing and domineering carnality. A spirit, but employed only in serving this flesh, and the fulfilling the divers lusts thereof, till regenerating grace take place.

Secondly, That which is con-natural, and consequently necessary, this similitude stands in life; divine spiritual vigour. There is life, as it is a spirit, in the natural sense in unregenerate ones too; but in the mean time this is given as the common character, alienated from the life of God. They have no participation of the divine life. Eph. iv. 18. There are two things wherein an apparent difference lies, and may be seen: that is, whether you consider the tendency, or whether you consider the aliment of that life, in the one, and in the other way.

i. Whether you consider the tendency hereof. Here is life and vigour in the regenerate man, so there is in the unregenerate too, and (it may be) a great deal more of natural life and vigour: but in the unregenerate where doth it tend? which way is it directed? still in the pursuit of vanity: the operations and actions of life in him are perpetual, everlasting triflings. But consider life now morally,

and things morally considered are to be estimated by their end. The end is morality, *habet ratione formæ*, is specifying and distinguishing. Here is life, but which way doth it work? He who to the regenerate is the immediate prime author of life, is the object too. They are "alive to God through Jesus Christ." Rom. vi 11. Dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is a great deal of vitality, liveliness, and vigour in an unregenerate man, perhaps. And which way doth it work? Either towards forbidden, or towards mean things. They are either alive to sin, to that which is forbidden; or towards things that are contemptibly mean. Alive to the world, towards which they should be mortified, crucified, and it crucified to them, so as that the world and they should be dead things to one another. When the great regenerating work is wrought, God is the great *terminus* of that life that is then begun. That is a life that is sanctified, is infused, added to a pre-existing thing. In regeneration a man is not in all essentials created anew; then what could be said to Nicodemus's question? "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" No, it is only an holy, sanctified influence that is infused, and doth supervene, as what was grafted upon nature, upon that stock; and so that life becomes an holy life that was but a natural life before. It rested before in all its tendencies in self; in flesh, in this world, in vain or prohibited things, as was said; but now it tends to God, and acts all in a divine sphere, and therefore is called a divine life, the life of God. And so look,

ii. To the aliment of this life, that shews this to be a divine creature that is now produced, that nothing will serve it to live upon but divine things: it must live upon immediate communications from God. And I pray you, as we go along, you will consider with yourselves whether there are any such workings and strivings in you as must have God for your continual support. Are there any constant aspirations towards him? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is the sense of the regenerate soul, I cannot live without God. The same as in Gal. ii. 19. That life that is peculiar to a regenerate person is, that he is through the law dead to the law; in order to a new life springing up in him, that he may live unto God. But how then afterwards is this maintained? Look to the twentieth verse, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And the life I live in the flesh; whilst I live so

meanly in this base flesh, I have a life springing and flourishing in me that is maintained continually by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. This is the regenerate life. By its tendencies, and by its aliment, it appears to be a divine thing, and that this is a creature born of God. For which way doth it work? and what supports doth it seek, and is it continually sustained by? This is most agreeable to the former: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. viii. 6. So long as the soul is under a prevailing carnality, so long is it dead to every thing that is good. But when regenerating grace takes place in it, as it is in that work spiritualized, thence it is consequent, that life springs in it agreeably to such a divine nature as is put into it. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace;" and a most significant adjunct that is; to let us know that this life is not the life of a fury, or that peace is not the peace of a fool; but both these are in conjunction, complicated with one another, peaceful life, and vital peace; a steady principle that works sedately and calmly, and with such regularity towards the objects and in the business that it is to be engaged and taken up about. It is not an ungovernable principle, but as there is life belonging to that sedate and peaceful frame that now takes place in the soul, so there is peace and calmness and tranquillity belonging to that life which springs up in the soul. And this is one part of its likeness unto God, called the life of God, or living unto God, that is part of the work of regeneration in such as are born of God. But then,

Thirdly, There is a divine power that appears and is put forth in such as are born of God. And this also is to be understood accommodately to the sphere of grace into which such an one is translated out of the order of quite natural production. It is raised into an higher sphere. The schools do commonly distinguish, in speaking to this matter, of those things that are of the order of nature, and those that are of the order of grace; speaking of them as two distinct spheres. And according to what was said concerning that life in the one and the other, so must we speak concerning that power that exerts itself in the one and the other sort of men. It was a divine power to which the production was owing of the divine nature. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, wherein there is given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Pet. i.

3, 4. A God-resembling nature! These productions carry the divine impress upon them in this respect, that there was an appearance of a divine power in the effect, which is a permanent thing. As we told you the influence did pass away, but it did *relinquere post se opus*, it left a work behind it, wherein are permanent, abiding signatures of a divine hand, that shew it to be a thing to be produced by God himself; whereupon you read of a certain power belonging to godliness. And that spirit that is given is said to be a spirit of love and power, and of a sound mind. To us a spirit is given, imparted and communicated. As in that John iii. you read of a Spirit producing, and spirit produced. The divine Spirit ingenerated is there called by the name of Spirit. And that spirit that is capable of being given, of abiding, and being permanent, is said to be a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. That which is born of God in a regenerate person, it is a powerful thing: and therefore is a principle of divine power which animates that form of godliness, so as that it is not a mere spiritless form. "From them that only have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, (practically deny it, understand it not, know no such thing, look after no such thing, as if they did in plain words deny the reality of it, as if it were only a fiction, a fancy,) from such turn away, as a living man would from a putrefying carcase." 2 Tim. iii. 5. There is no society between the living and the dead. A regenerate man can take no pleasure in such conversation; with such as savour of nothing else but carnality and death in all their conversation; from such turn away. The divine principle in them as well as their rule bids them to turn away from them. There is none but impure, putrid breath that comes from them. They smell of a grave, turn away from them.

It is very true indeed, that when the regenerate work takes place there is very often great complaints of much weakness: the good that I would, that I cannot do; and when I would be doing good, evil is present with me. But there is a great deal of difference between weakness and death, between an ability to do much and a disability to do any thing at all. There is nothing can be done by the unregenerate person in vital and real religion; to every such good work he is reprobate. It is one thing to be impotent and feel, another to be impotent and feel nothing. A carcase doth not complain that it can do nothing, but a sick man doth; he complains of impotence if he be sick only. But if there be a total death, it is impotency, of which there is no

complaint. And what there is of power, (as there is always some power always going with the regenerate life and principle,) it is a power of a higher kind and order than that which doth belong to the rest of men, wherein they do something, though but little, yet above all that the unregenerate world can do. They can love God, though it is too weakly, too faintly: they can desire after him, can pant for him. The rest of the world are strangers to such desires, to such designs. The practical workings of the powers that belong to them still terminate in an inferior orb, they never reach God, there is no working of power that way. And therefore it is said of such unregenerate men in common, that they are without strength. It signifies total destitution. They are without any strength of that kind; in that kind they can do nothing at all. When a man shall make an essay upon itself, try himself before his own soul, say to it, Oh! my soul, what canst thou do in a design for God, for heaven, for eternal life? When all a man's natural powers are bound *quoad hoc*, as to this. It is true he hath powers in him belonging to his nature; but they work not at all this way. Why, here is a manifest difference between the regenerate and unregenerate world in this respect. In the regenerate there is a principle of divine power that works in them towards God, and can employ itself about divine things.

Fourthly, This similitude unto God appears in the knowledge which such as are born of him have of divine things. To wit, that gustful knowledge, that practical knowledge, that transmutative knowledge, which will most manifestly appear to be peculiar to them from the rest of men. In the 19th verse of this chapter, where the text lies, "We know that we are of God, (an eliptical expression of being born of God,) and he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true." Are we born of God? Then we have a spiritual eye-sight, a cognitive power, enlightened towards God so as to make us capable of knowing him, and of knowing him with so active and operative a knowledge as to give us an union with him; he hath given an understanding to know him that is true, so as to be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life.

Consider the matter reasonably. Do you think that they who are born of God are born blind? Are they born blind towards God, and towards the things of God? Doth he emit from himself any so imperfect, and mean, and maimed

a production? "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." 1 John ii. 13. As soon as they are children, as soon as they are so born, born of God as their Father, there is a disposition of mind to him to receive the knowledge of him. The rest of the world do not like to retain God in their knowledge, they are ignorant of God; not because he cannot be known, that that knowledge should take place in or should center in them. That knowledge is our notion of divine light, though it hath a further notion, as you may hear hereafter. They have a light darted into the inmost center of their souls. Indeed a superficial light there is in every unregenerate mind too; some natural notions of God; light that is morally, objectively divine, conversant about God. For I do not think any man can totally abolish and rend off the characters of God from his mind, tear out the ideas. They that have set themselves most industriously to do so have been able to effect nothing therein to satisfy themselves, but so as still there would remain a *formido oppositi*, a dread that he is whom they would fain make themselves believe not to be. Therefore the fool's saying, of what we find Ps. xiv. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;" it is not an assertion, but it is a wish. The copulative in the text is wanting, which we supply needlessly. The fool hath said in his heart, No God. Let there be none, oh that there were none! It is not what they put into a proposition, there is none that can obtain so much of themselves, but they have their secret wish, Oh that there were none! So they are willingly ignorant of God. "Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Eph. iv. 18. Such a blindness as consists only in a resolution not to see, or in an unwillingness to see. But that knowledge of God, and of divine things which belong to the regenerate state; it is not that superficial knowledge which hovers in the soul and surface of the mind; but it is central, it centers in the soul. "God, that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts." So that this light which is in the heart, must be understood to carry a liking and complacency in it. That as the unregenerate soul doth not like to retain God in its knowledge, the regenerate liketh this knowledge; it is lightsome to them, and carries a pleasant savour with it: whence it comes to be operative and unitive, and unites the soul with the object known. And,

Fifthly, Another signature of God upon this same product,

a regenerate soul, is spiritual wisdom, which superadds much, in the ordinary notion of it, unto mere knowledge: for many may know much, that are not wise. But wisdom is the parent of this seed and offspring; therefore, it is said to be justified of its own children. All the unregenerate are fools, "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus iii. 3, 4, 5, 6. There are not greater instances of folly and madness among them who lie under cure in houses set apart on purpose for that end, than are generally to be found, (though not taken notice of because they are common,) in the generality of the unconverted world. They that in so clear light spend their strength for trifles, will not get understanding of what is their best good They that throw away their souls for nought, that rush upon armed vengeance, and are not afraid to perish; they continually run counter to principles, that are secretly conscious of the immortality of the soul, profess to believe there is a heaven, and a hell, yet they run away from the one, and run into the other in sight. Greater instances of madness and folly are not conceivable than these.

It is only the regenerate that do become wise. A "spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to them, that they may know the hope of that better calling, and what are the riches of that glorious inheritance which God makes common among his saints." Eph. i. 17, 18. And so, indeed, do the regenerate seed justify that wisdom that is their parent: "Wisdom is justified of her children;" so that it may be known, even to the world, that these are the children of it. They are not a generation of fools. See how wisely they do design, and how wisely they pursue their design, to wit, by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for honour, and glory, and immortality, to the actual enjoying of eternal life. No lower things do they design, nor a less suitable course do they take in pursuance of it, than by patient continuance in well doing to seek it. Their design is high and great, and their pursuit apt and suitable. This shews the only wise God is their Parent: they discover of what seed and offspring they are.

It is true, the children of this world are wiser in their

generation than the children of light: with reference to the things that their generation can reach, they are wiser—wiser for this world. In reference to worldly matters and designing, they pursue them with more constancy, because they have no other. But the children of light shew themselves to be so in their higher, and more excellent end, and in their more regular course which they take in order thereunto. But now I add, in the next place,

Sixthly, The great resemblance wherein this creature appears to be a divine production, is the divine holiness stampt upon it, and imparted to it. It is a holy creature. It doth most eminently bear the image of him from whom it is, upon that account. And that makes it a glorious creature, as he himself is glorious in and by his holiness. "Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness." Ex. xv. 11. They are changed into the same image, and thereby become glorious creatures, as he is their glorious Creator and Father. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18. Here is this work in its inchoation and in its progress; that work by which souls are at first made God-like creatures; and then promoted and carried on towards a state of maturity, and made ripe for the regions of glory into which they are to be translated at length. This impression of holiness upon them is by the regenerating Spirit, which is therefore called the Spirit of holiness, and the Holy Ghost, as you know nothing is to be more frequently noted in the Book of God. This is a creature, born spirit of Spirit; that Spirit of which it is born is the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost, even as such. And therefore, such must this production be. You find (1 Pet. i. 3,) that God is adored upon this account, as having begotten such as are truly appertaining to him upon this special account, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled. Nothing could be more agreeable than that they who are born of him, should inherit from him; that they who are his children should be his heirs also. But having once made mention of them, and of him, upon this relative account, as they are begotten of him, and as he is their great Parent, and the author of this spiritual and new divine being to them. Thereupon it follows, (as you may see in the same chapter) "As obedient children ye are no longer to fashion yourselves according to your former lusts, in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye

holy in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." And by the way, you must know that efficacious calling and regeneration is all one. God calls when he creates; when he creates, he regenerates. His calling that which was not to exist and be. And this is but another name for the regenerating work, in which respect any are said to be born of God. Now inasmuch "as he which hath called you (that is as much as to say, as he that hath begotten you, he of of whom ye are born) is holy, so be ye also holy in all manner of conversation;" which is but to make your conversation correspond to the very principles of your birth: For you cannot be his offspring if you be not a holy seed. Because he is holy, so you must be supposed to be holy in your very constitution and frame. And therefore see you to it, that you express what is correspondent hereunto in all your walkings, that in all manner of conversation you discover yourselves to be the children of such a Father, holy ones as he is. It is upon this account, that they that are born of him are said to be "children of light." When I told you last time, that according to our notion of light it meaneth divine knowledge, taken in the borrowed and metaphorical sense, (for every one knows what it is taken in the proper and literal sense) I then hinted, that taken in the metaphorical sense too, it hath a further notion, to wit, to signify holiness as well as knowledge: and indeed, knowledge is no further to be called and counted divine light, than as it tends to holiness, and is productive of it; and from thence it comes to be denominated light. It is light, as it terminates in that which is itself so splendid and illustrious a thing, holiness; a bright, a shining, a glorious thing. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works:" that is, not knowledge, that they may hear you talk fine notions; but that they may see your good works. That is the light, the divine peculiar light, that distinguisheth the children of God from another seed. See how light is taken principally in that, 1 Epistle John i. 5, 6. How is the solemnity of a message sent unto the children of men on purpose to make discovery to them of the nature and excellency of God. And, saith the apostle, "This is the message which we have heard, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The words that follow do plainly enough shew what is meant by light and by darkness here. By light is meant purity and holiness, as we cannot conceive any thing more pure and simple than light; and therefore not any thing more expressive of holiness than light. "God is light;" as if he

should have said of himself, I would have all to conceive so of me; and therefore I send this message unto men, to instruct them how to form their notions and conceptions of me. I am light, and with me there is no darkness at all. And now, saith the apostle, "If any say they have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, they lie, and do not the truth." If any say they have a participation with God, that they partake and communicate with him in any thing divine, and walk in darkness, they tell a most gross and insolent and absurd lie: "they lie, and do not the truth." It is a practical lying, their practice gives themselves the lie; they do (as it were) proclaim themselves liars. And what is the meaning of all this, but to shew that light is holiness. If any say they have fellowship with God, and live wickedly, shew themselves to be impure and unholy creatures, that is a great lie, a gross lie, a lie most injurious to God, and no ways advantageous to themselves: they can gain nothing by it, but they wrong him by it infinitely, to make it to be thought as if he were an impure one, like them that pretend to him, to be acquainted with him, to be conversant with him. It is to make a wrong and false representation of him to the world, so that they gain nothing by it but shame retorted into their own faces; for at the same time when they do so, they (as it were) virtually call themselves liars before the world. Because they who know any thing at all of God, know that he cannot be such a one: "He is light, and with him is no darkness at all."

The same notion we have of light as it signifies holiness, in that Eph. v. 8. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" speaking of that mighty turn and change wrought upon the soul in the work of regeneration. Ye were darkness in your unregenerate state, now are ye light in the Lord. You not only have it, but are light; as before ye not only had darkness in you, but ye were darkness, as it were so many lumps and masses of impure, gross, and consistent darkness. But now you are light. Indeed there may be light in an unregenerate mind; but though such a one may be said to have it, he is not said to be it. And that light though it may have a tendency to some suitable disposition in the heart, yet it prevails not to effect, to bring it about. Though there be a weak tendency thitherward, the thing is not done. And therefore that light doth forfeit its name, and is still called "darkness," (as our Lord saith;) and you may take his judgment in the case without wavering: "if the light that is in thee be darkness,"

how great is that darkness!" The very light that is in an unregenerate person, is rather to be called darkness. As in the natural world there is no such thing as *puræ tenebræ*, no pure darkness, no darkness without a mixture of light; but the denomination is taken from that which prevails; otherwise, we should never say it is night, never say it is darkness. We can never say so, as supposing no admixture of light at all; but when darkness prevails, then we say, concerning the region and horizon, it is dark. And so it is with the unregenerate soul: till the day-spring from on high doth visit, and till the Sun of righteousness arise, that soul is a region of darkness, impure darkness, such a darkness as wherein men work all manner of wickedness, living still under the power and dominion of the Prince of darkness: for he governs in that region. And therefore the work of regeneration too is elsewhere expressed by "being translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," our Lord Jesus Christ; and "out of the power of darkness into his marvellous light;" to signify that we were under other government, other power, before. They that are born of God therefore (as he is the Father of lights) are children of light; that is, holy ones. There is that frame of holiness that invests them, and is put upon them, which carries a lustre, a glory in it, as you have heard, and this must still shine brighter and brighter, in those that are truly righteous, unto the perfect day. And as they gradually approach nearer and nearer to the land of light, and thereby are made more and more meet to partake at length of "the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i. 12. But,

Seventhly, Another divine character of those that are born of God, wherein they resemble him, is Truth. He is the God of truth, who is their Parent and Begetter: and they are accordingly the children of truth. Understand me here to mean truth in the moral sense: I speak not now of the truth of propositions, or of the truth of things in their nature, logical or metaphysical truth; but that which is in the spirit and proper sense, moral, and that lies in two things; 1. In speaking as we think, and 2. In doing as we speak: these two make up the notion of moral truth. Herein God is himself a great exemplar and pattern to us; and his image is most eminently conspicuous in all that are born of him in this also. He glories to be called the God of truth. Moses in that dying song of his, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4, when he tells us he will now publish the name of the Lord, he therefore exhorts all to ascribe greatness unto God.

"Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is the same thing that is spoken of him so often in scripture under the name of faithfulness: the divine faithfulness, that takes in part of the meaning, though not all of what is carried in the notion of truth; for faithfulness doth particularly refer to the promises he hath made, or the covenants that he hath promulgated and entered into. It is generally speaking, the same thing with sincerity; that is another comprehensive expression, that takes in the full of what is signified by the name of truth. They that are born of God are true, the children of truth, sincere, upright, without deceit or guile; when they speak, speaking the truth from the heart; when they act, acting according to what they have spoken, especially wherein they have obliged themselves by promise. And that is the proper notion of fidelity, one great branch of this truth. That is a glorious attribute of God, wherein he is pleased frequently to represent his excellency to the children of men; his faithfulness that reacheth to the clouds. Look as high as heaven, look all the way between this earth and up to the heavens, and you have continual instances throughout of the faithfulness of God; all things being conserved through this vast and spacious universe according to the tenor of his word, and those ordinances that he hath settled in this great creation of his. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the substantial, consubstantial image of God, and the brightness of his glory, this is his great character too, the Amen, the faithful and true witness. It is a peculiar name that belongs to the Son of God, "he that is faithful and true." Often he is spoken of by those distinguishing titles: and well they belong to him, as he was the original, substantial image of God. The image of God in the regenerate, those that are born of him, it is true, is much inferior in them, (as we have heard about the generation of the only begotten Son,) to what it is in him.; but it is not contrary, it is a true image, though it be not so perfect an image. It doth not make a false representation of God: it represents him truly, though not so perfectly as in the first and original impression of it in his only eternally begotten Son; of whom it is said, Isa. xi. 5, "That faithfulness is the girdle of his loins:" they are girt about with truth. And observe, after the same manner, and under the same notion, is that truth which is said to be found in the children of God in this

world, spoken of too. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, having your loins girt about with truth." Eph. vi. 14. This keeps men steady, keeps them in an equal temper, so as they do not vary from themselves. Being once made like God, then they are to be continually in an uniformity and agreeableness to themselves; their course equal, and the temper of their spirits steady, true, and not apt to swerve or prevaricate this way or that, but like his children. Therefore, inasmuch as he always counts it the glory of his own being, his own nature, that falsehood is incompetent, incompatible, yea, impossible, to him, a God "that cannot lie;" so if he hath any children in this world, see how he speaks of them, "They are my people, children that will not lie: therefore he was their Saviour." Isa. lxiii. 8. Put away lying, (saith the apostle,) and let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Put away lying, in reference to narrations, and lying in reference to promises. It hath the same distinction that oaths are wont to have, which are usually different by those terms, of assertory and promissory. If one should be guilty of perjury, it may be either of these two ways; and if one be guilty of lying, it is one of these two ways too; either by representing a thing otherwise than it is; or by promising to do that which was never intended, and, therefore, accordingly is never done. But the one way or the other, there is that which is contrary to sincerity, and to that truth which is the divine glory, the glory of the Divine Being, and wherein he doth exalt himself so infinitely, the God "that cannot lie." And if I have a people in this world, if I have a seed, a race, a progeny, though it cannot be said of them, they are those that cannot lie, (that is the divine prerogative,) yet it may be said of them, they will not lie, "children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour."

It is said concerning the inhabitants of Sion (which Sion represents in a borrowed transferred sense, the church on earth first, and then the church in heaven in the highest sense), the inhabitants of Sion (into which none come but by the divine birth, they are come into it whoever are of it), that they are such as speak the truth from their hearts. And never doth any man come into the forgiven state, till he come into the regenerate state. Then it is that God pardons, when he receives and regenerates. He gives righteousness and the Spirit of his Son both at once. By the one of which he doth one work, by the other of them he doth the other. They are never separated. When any are forgiven, it is a blessed state they come into. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is

covered. But then observe the character of that person that is the subject of forgiveness, he in whose spirit there is "no guile." What! a forgiven man, a regenerate man, one born of God; and a false man, a deceitful man, a guileful, a fraudulent man? He that shall talk at this rate speaketh inconsistencies; he compounds impossible things. A regenerate man, and one made up of falsehood, deceit, and guile; this cannot be. He that is born of the God of truth, there is the image of him as such upon such a man. He is born of the Spirit; and "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Ephes. v. 9.

And while I urge faithfulness and truth as the character of the regenerate, those that are born of God, give me leave myself to be so far faithful to you as to declare, and testify in the Lord, that whoever they are that can allow themselves in falsehood, insincerity, deceitfulness, and guilefulness any way, let their profession be never so splendid, they do but bely themselves in it. They the children of God, they born of God, they who are the sons of the God of faith, and yet children of falsehood, is a thing that I will not only say is not, but cannot be. It is an impossibility. God hath no such children; they that are born of him, carry this image of him upon them, they are children of truth, sincere and upright; so that if they speak, they speak the truth in their hearts, just as they apprehend things to be; if they promise, they promise what they intend to perform. They are as they speak: if they have spoken to their hurt, they will not change. Their word is a sacred thing with them, as God's word is with him.

It is true, indeed, there may be much of this seen in the unregenerate world: truth hath been highly magnified among many of the more refined Pagans; and it may have place with many among us (oh, that it had more,) in whom the divine nature hath no place. But here is the distinction, when men are true to one another for God's sake and for conscience sake; not for reputation's sake, but for God's sake, and because of their devotedness to him, and because they must truly represent him to the world; this is that which is distinguishing: and, indeed, if men be true to one another, and untrue to God, leave out him as the centre in whom they unite, and upon whose account and for whose sake they are true to one another; all their truth to one another is but such a combination as that of several conspirators against their lawful

and rightful prince, who may be true to one another, while they are all false to him. But there is no such thing as truth in the right sense, and that which will turn to their true advantage at last in whom it is found, but when God is made the centre, and they are true to God: if they be true to one another, and not true to God, it is a casualty; they have a disposition in their minds to be false to one another if there be occasion; if they be not true to God, if they be not stedfast in his covenant, if they be towards him "as a deceitful bow," (as it is said of Ephraim) they will not be always true to one another.

And pray let this be deeply considered: Supposing that truth have its primary reference to God, I am devoted to him, and I must be true and faithful; this is then the character of them that are born of him; they that are with the Lamb are chosen and faithful and true; and he saith, "Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt receive a crown of life." Here is their character, they must be faithful to him first, and then by consequence to one another in all their dealings, transactions, conversation, and affairs. Take this for an invariable character of an unregenerate person, he is one that can be false, if it will consist with his interest; if it will serve his other purposes, he can allow himself to be so. If he be true, it is (as was said) a contingency. But take this for the character of a regenerate person, he is true to God first; and because he is so, he dares to be false to no man. And it hath been a method observed by some of the wiser and more refined Pagans, *Qui deus non timet, non curat homines. (Cicero.)* They are liable, one time or another, to prove false to man, that do not fear God. But if the matter do begin there, then is truth a derivation from the divine nature upon such a one; that as God is the God of truth, from whom it comes, and by whom it is inwrought into man, so the children of God, who are born of him, it may be consistently said of them they are children of truth, they are such as have a reverence for truth; it is with them a venerable thing. I would not speak otherwise than I think, or do otherwise than I have said, notwithstanding the lie might be rewarded with the gain of the world. Truth is with them a sacred thing. They that find no such restraint upon their spirits, have nothing of the divine nature in them. I cannot say or do so or so, say otherwise than I think, do otherwise than I have spoken; I find there is a nature in me that withholds me, that prompts me quite otherwise: I can

do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, (according to another larger notion of the truth) I must not, I may not.

This I reckoned of great necessity to be stood upon, fearing that too many may very much misunderstand the notion of religion, while they limit and confine it to the first table only, without letting it have a governing influence upon the affairs that relate to the second. But we are to take both in conjunction. And the error would be the same if men should again confine all their regularity to the rules of the second table too, and think very well of themselves, because they do not transgress those rules. Here is the same danger, and the same fatal error and mistake. But if we will deal safely and righteously, safely for ourselves, and righteously with God, then, I say, we must take the connection of both together; and take all the rules of duty which belong to the second table, as they have their foundation in the first, to wit, in "the love of God, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our might, and our neighbour as ourselves." These two make up the law and the prophets, and this is nothing else but the work that is abridged and epitomized in regeneration, when the law of God is written in the heart, and transcribed in the inner man, put into "fleshly tables (as the apostle speaks) not by ink and paper, but by the Spirit of the living God." 2 Corinth. iii. 3. That is it which is done by regeneration; when God doth beget out of an impure apostate world a holy seed, a divine offspring for himself. Whereas their defection and apostasy lay in the violation of the whole intire law of their creation, their regeneration lies in the renewing the impression of it, turning it into a living law within, not into an audible law or a visible law, that they can hear with ears or read with eyes, but a living law, which they feel and relish with their hearts; their hearts being contempered to it. And he Spirit of God makes no maimed impression, it makes the impression intire and full, so as that all the several parts of that law are expressed together. There are characters that signify each several part, and these are but the several lineaments of the new creature, or the new man, pourtrayed in the soul by the regenerating Spirit of God.

It greatly concerns us when we consider that the gospel (under the dispensation whereof we live) is the Spirit's instrument in regeneration; and that is part of which we now hear. It is greatly, I say, to be considered, what there is done to this purpose by this gospel upon

our souls. If we never be regenerated by the gospel, we are very unreasonable to expect that God should use any other methods with us. This is the word of the kingdom into which all they that have a real place in it are regenerated; they are born into it, *in regno nati sumus*, as that moralist speaks upon another account. We are born members of this kingdom: and by what means hath he begotten us again? even hereby, by the word of truth. I beseech you let this be seriously and deeply considered. If there be any such thing as regeneration, that is, if there be any such thing as the raising up a divine offspring to God out of this world, that shall not perish when the rest of the world do, it is by this means that the thing is to be done; "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. Is the gospel preached to us for this purpose, and is the proper design of it to regenerate at first, and nourish afterwards unto eternal life? For *ex iis nutrimur ex quibus constamur*; the same gospel is to both. Methinks it should beget in us the most deeply serious and solicitous thoughts imaginable. What is done upon us to this blessed purpose? Hath any thing heretofore been done? Or do I find any thing yet adoing? Was nothing done the last year? May it be hoped that any thing shall be done this year? Was nothing done the last Lord's day? Is it not yet to be hoped that somewhat may be done to-day? Do I find my spirit altered? There are great previous dispositions in natural productions, before there is a complete product: What disposition do I find? What tendency towards such a birth? What strivings, what agonies, what pangs are in my soul? Do I reckon I am to be born again, born of God, born from Heaven, and never feel it? Can so mighty a change pass upon my soul as amounts to another birth, to a divine birth, and I never be sensible of it? If such a day as this pass with us, and we feel no such thoughts in our spirits, and are unconcerned, what have we to justify our unconcernedness? Wherewith shall we justify our being unconcerned? We can have nothing as a ground on which rationally to justify us, unless we could tear the whole gospel constitution, unless we could ascertain ourselves

there is no such thing as an heaven or hell; for if there be, and there will be so vast differences in the final states of men, certainly those eternal differences must have their foundation here: as men are distinguished by being regenerate and unregenerate, so they will be for heaven or hell. Sure if there be such two distinct states into which men are to be disposed of by the Supreme and Universal Judge, who cannot but do wisely, and righteously, and holily, it cannot be that men should be disposed of into those states promiscuously, whether they are his children or not his children, as if he would make no difference between those that are born of him, and those that are not born of him, but have lived and died in perpetual rebellion against him, full of enmity and perpetual malignity towards him, whereby they testify themselves never to have been begotten of him, and that they are not like him; as the following words after the text, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." If he begat us, we shall be sure to love him. They that have all their days chosen distance from him, is it a supposeable thing God should have begotten any according to his own nature, and they should not love him? Not love to converse with him, love not to be in his presence, to open their hearts to him, to unbosom and pour out their souls before him? Hath God begotten any such unnatural children that can live without him all the day, never come near him, never look towards him, never think of him, that know not what belongs to prayer to him? What can men have to preserve peace and quiet in their souls, but the apprehension—that sure there are no such things as heaven and hell, of which we have heard so much?

But who would run the danger of it? If men do but apprehend the possibility, if they have allowed themselves to attend to that light that makes so clear and bright a discovery of another world, and of those distinct states in it; if, I say, they have not allowed themselves to attend to the light, so as thereby to be ascertained in their own hearts, there is as surely an heaven and an hell as there is an earth (and we have as much reason to be ascertained of the one by believing what is plainly testified, and what the reason of the thing doth evince to us to be true, as we have to be certain of the other from our eye sight,) then all is vain that we say to them.

But if men would but believe all this, then there can be no more reasonable thing in all the world, than to be full

of enquiring thoughts concerning our state, till we arrive to some proportionable certainty concerning it, till we can say, Blessed be God, now I find some of those characters upon me, that speak me one of his children, that spirituality, that life, that power, that knowledge of him and divine things, that wisdom, that holiness, that truth, that will justify me in enumerating myself to the children of God, his family, counting myself among them, and believing that he will count me among them too. But if we find no such characters as these, and yet say we are children of God, we pretend to him, we profess him, that very profession itself is a lie; as is said concerning those false pretenders, Rev. iii. 9, that said "they were Jews, (that is, Christians,) and were not, but of the synagogue of Satan, they do lie." It is a very fearful thing when even a man's profession is a lie. I call myself a Christian, but it is a lie; one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, but it is a lie; for whosoever believeth this, is born of God; but of this I find nothing in myself.

SERMON XLVI.*

I JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

But now I might add in the next place,

Eighthly, It is a creature endowed with a most generous liberty, that disdains, that cannot be patient of servitude; the sons of God must be free born. This is evident, and hath been elsewhere spoken to and opened. But then,

Ninthly, It is a creature of a very peculiar benignity and goodness. Who would expect it to be otherwise? When you hear of a God-like creature born into this world, what would you look to find it, but a creature made up of goodness? The Spirit is the immediate regenerator, the great agent in this work. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John iii. 6. And we are told, Ephes. v. 9, "That the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." It lies in an universal goodness; here is the product, this is that God-like thing that is now produced. When one is said to be born of God, he is a crea-

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ture made up of goodness; it is the production of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit; "and the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." And it is added, "righteousness and truth too," which we have spoken of before. Every one that doth righteousness is born of God, and the children of God are children that will not lie, but abhor falsehood. But they are also an offspring of great benignity, of most extensive and diffusive goodness.

I apprehend it may be worth the while to insist upon this, because that there is not another thing wherein the divine nature and likeness are more expressed and held forth in the work of regeneration than in this thing; in no other respect rather or more than this is God said to be the Father of such, or they to be born of God. And, oh! that we may, I for my part speak, and you hear as those that apprehend the weight and importance of what is now to be spoken; we are in all these things distinguishing the divine seed and offspring from the children of the worst of fathers; and there is no middle state between these two; we must either be born from above or born from beneath; no middle state, speaking of morals, when we speak of naturals we know there can be but one author of nature; but as to morals, two great parents and fathers divide the world, and one of them you must call so. They that are not born of God his own word concludes concerning them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. But now see wherein a divine production appears and shews itself to be such; here is somewhat begotten, born of God, that appears like God in this, as a thing made up of goodness. And here I shall more distinctly consider,

i. What objects this goodness hath reference to in them. And,

ii. Wherein, or in what exertions it shews itself towards such objects.

i. What objects it refers to. You must still consider that an imitation of the divine goodness; that supposed all along as that wherein this creature is a God-like creature. It is a God-like creature as it is a most beneficent creature; and it being the goodness of beneficence, or beneficent goodness that we are to speak to under this head; we shall have somewhat further under another order of heads, to consider what may admit of the same name, but will be of somewhat a different kind. But our present discourse it is to be confined unto a beneficent goodness, and being so we

are not now at this time to consider God as one of the objects that this goodness hath reference to. "My goodness extendeth not to thee," saith the Psalmist (speaking of such goodness,) Psalm xvi. 2; but, as was said, it being an imitation of the divine goodness, it must respect such objects as divine goodness, which is beneficent, doth respect, and they are of two sorts; there is a more general, and there is a more special object of the divine goodness, as hath been largely shewn upon another occasion. God's goodness hath,

(i.) A general object. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" so diffusive, so flowing is his goodness, the whole earth is full of it. The whole earth—a more surprising instance of the extensiveness of it could not have been given. The whole earth—this stage of wickedness, where constant rebellions against the Majesty of Heaven have been in continued succession from age to age, and from generation to generation acted. The whole earth is full of his goodness; a thing that should not only convince, but amaze that it should be so.

Why, such is the goodness of this creature that is born of God proportionally extensive—"As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," Gal. vi. 10; a goodness that must flow every where, as far as one can, that must diffuse and spread itself to our very uttermost. As you have opportunity—supposing there be an ability and power, then there needs nothing more than opportunity. If there be opportunity, let this goodness exert itself; this shall shew you a God-like sort of creatures, born of God, bearing his image; he doth good to all—"as you have opportunity do you do good to all."

When he had it in design to raise up to himself a seed, a new creation in the world, it must be understood it should be such as it was fit for him to own as the peculiar parent of this offspring. What? shall I raise up a new seed to be but like other men? Is this like to God? when he was to do a new thing in the world, to raise up a new sort of people, that they should be but just like the old? Think what men are naturally, and as they grow up from the old stock; every one minds his own things, every one is for himself, cares not what becomes of others, what becomes of this world. But this creature, born of God, is of a large comprehensible spirit, it measures with the universe, not narrow, not clung, not contracted; it bounds (comparatively) private interest, my good is the good of the creation. It is spoken as a most

peculiar character of this seed, that when all else do naturally mind their own things, as the apostle speaks concerning Timothy, he doth as naturally mind the things of another, of his neighbour, as if he had no private interest of his own at all. God will have it known that in this second creation of his, this new attempt, when he was to raise up a people, a seed out of a common universal ruin, I will do such a thing in the world as shall make the world look about them, and wonder to behold what new sort of people are sprung up among them. That whereas they have ever himself for his end, himself for his measure, every one being for himself; here is a people that are off from self, a self-denying people, a self-abandoning people, made up of goodness, and making that goodness to flow as far as ever it can; for it is a divine goodness, and they make this goodness disperse like God's, they make it to flow to the uttermost they can.

It must be so, when you consider that this being born of God, and that every such divine birth, doth spring out of believing Jesus to be the Christ: whoso believeth, is born of God, and is a Christian indeed, and honours the Christian name. What, shall the world be Christianized and made nothing the better?—made Christian, and not made good? How unlike God were this!—how mean and low a design would that be! If they be Christians, they must be good men, and so appear born of God: when they are changed, when they become Christians, they become imitators of his goodness; otherwise, how despicable is the performance of the Son of God in this world, when he is to raise up other sons that shall be just as the rest of men are? But then,

(ii.) This goodness it hath a special object too, even as the divine goodness which it imitates hath—"My goodness extends not to thee"—but to whom then? eminently, principally, to the saints that are in the earth, those excellent ones "in whom is all my delight." Psalm xvi. 3. God takes pleasure in his people; he loveth the righteous; he hath a peculiar love, good will, and kindness towards those that he doth regenerate, that are born of him. And so they that are born of him have a peculiar kindness and goodwill unto one another, as the text speaks—"Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth also them that are begotten of him." It cannot but be so, as there is opportunity to do it, good must be done to all, but "especially to those who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. They that bear the same image, that have the same nature, that spring from the same father, and are of the same seed, this goodness must

have a more peculiar reference and tendency to such; and it will argue our not being of his seed, not being children of this Father, if all be alike to him, if his kindness be not distinct, if he be as well pleased with the conversation of the one sort as of the other. But then,

ii. Besides the consideration of the objects of this goodness, we must consider wherein it shews itself, and in what exertions it appears towards its object—why,

(i.) It appears in sundry negatives; and they are not to be overlooked, for there are great appearances of this goodness in them, as you will have cause to judge: As,

[i.] In not being apt to harm others. This is goodness, when there is not an aptness to harm another. What, is it to be thought that this creature, born of God, is a mischievous creature, as it were, born to do mischief? how is that possible? As our Lord was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, so are they to be,—"Be ye harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," Phil. ii. 15. Mark the connexion, "the sons of God"—and harmful? mischievous?—that cannot be: hath he begot such a sort of creatures into the world to do mischief in it? no; such are not of this seed.

[ii.] Much less are they apt to take pleasure in another's harm: so it is with many other men—it is a pleasant sight to them to behold the mischiefs and misdeeds of others; but it cannot be so with them that are of this seed. Again,

[iii.] This good appears in an inaptness to do evil for evil. They do not think themselves warranted, Because such an one hath done evil to me, therefore I will do evil to him; "not rendering evil for evil," no, by no means, this cannot agree to this seed, this God-like sort of creatures. Again,

[iv.] They are very inapt to be provoked: this sort of creature is not apt to provocations, as is the character 1 Cor. xiii. 5—"not easily provoked," which is a great imitation of God, who is "slow to anger;" so must they be, and so they habitually are, "swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath."

[v.] Much less can they suffer anger and wrath upon provocation to arise to a fixed hatred; they are quite another sort of men from the men of the world, of whom this is the character, "hateful, and hating one another," Titus iii. 3. This cannot belong to this God-like sort of creature, to have a fixed hate for any one, whosoever they be; no, not the worst enemy in all the world; the contrary is expressly commanded, and is a law in their very natures, even in reference to the very worst enemy. And,

[vi.] They are not habitually vindictive: not only do they not in fact render evil for evil; not only do they abstain from this, or not do this; but much more are they alien from an habitual vindictiveness: to be in the habit of their minds revengeful, oh, this cannot be in this God-like seed! And,

[vii.] Much less is it possible for them to be implacable: this is again the worst sort of mankind, which is described by this character, implacable; that cannot be reconciled; if once there be a grudge it is everlasting, a fixed thing. Oh, this cannot belong to this God-like seed, to be of an irreconcileable spirit, it hath the sum of hell in it, the devil as the parent of it appears in this countenance, nothing more plain; the very show of that countenance discovers who is the father, an implacable spirit, malicious, vindictive, and then implacable. With this are conjunct other things that we might mention: as envy at the good of another: it is the notion of envy to grieve at another's good: as it is an argument of a most diabolical spirit to rejoice at another's hurt, to take complacency in the harm of another; so to grieve at the good one hath in himself, or doth possess and enjoy, such an one is better than I, and that grieves me—or such an one doth more good, or possesseth more good than I, and this I am grieved at; this cannot consist with the divine goodness that appears in this God-begotten creature. But then,

(ii.) This goodness shews itself in positives too, and that more eminently,

[i.] In actual doing good as there is opportunity, and towards both sorts of objects. "To all as there is opportunity, but especially to the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. So doth this goodness imitate the divine goodness, he is good and doth good. Never talk of being good if you do no good when there is opportunity. And again,

[ii.] In an habitual propension thereunto, so as to do good with complacency and delight; so this goodness imitates the divine goodness; he exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth, because he delights therein; so doth the good man do good even with delight, tasting and relishing his own act in what he doth. Oh, how sweet is it to do good! he tastes the relish of it more than the receiver of it doth, incomparably more; according to that motto of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A more blessed thing, a thing that carries more sweet and savour in it. A man finds a blessedness in it; he tastes the fruits

of his own doing as a grateful relish. God enables me to do good, to imitate his goodness, and this is refreshing to my soul, this is fruit which, by divine vouchsafement, I am enabled to eat and feed upon: such an one feeds upon his own act, in what he doth in this kind, owning all to grace, as that is called grace that was bestowed on the church of the Macedonians and those Corinthian Christians to whom the apostle did write; he propounds it to them that they might abound, or would labour to excel in the same grace too. Oh, what a pleasant savour hath grace and goodness! Oh, the sweet relishes of it! It would make one wonder indeed to take notice of some expressions of pagans about the pleasure of doing good; in what transports do they sometimes speak of the delights of friendship upon this account, placing all the sweetness of it in the obliging another, so as that it should be impossible for the person obliged to have so pleasant relishes as he that doth oblige. But this must be most peculiarly so in divine goodness: when regeneration makes a good man, produceth a divine creature, his delight is in doing good as God's own is. And hereupon,

[iii.] He doth good for goodness sake; it is its own reward. It is not for vain glory, not for applause, not that he may draw on a good turn afterwards; it is not to gratify such and such, as hoping they may have opportunity afterwards to gratify him; but it is doing good because it is good for goodness itself's sake. This is simple goodness, pure goodness, incorrupt goodness, unbribed goodness. And,

[vi.] It appears in easiness to forgive. If any do evil to me, it is not a task, it is not a difficulty, it is not a penalty to forgive, but as an act of nature when it comes from a good man, from one born of God; for he hath the nature in him that prompts him thereunto, a divine nature imparted to him, so that it is far easier to forgive than to revenge: revenge indeed must needs have upon a rational account more difficulty with such an one, because that requires contrivance, and waiting for an opportunity, and, it may be, setting many instruments on work to effect it. But goodness flows immediately into this act, it is done of myself; but I must employ many others in revenge, and that may be contriving long; but a man never needs any contrivance to forgive, it is a thing done out of hand, the product of a man's soul: this is the goodness of the children of God, those that are born of God with a nature like his own. The regenerate soul, oh, what enmities doth he forgive, and what enemies! How continued, how inveterate,

how often exerted with many through the course of their lives, even almost to the last end of them, so as to leave scarce time of repentance and returning! This readiness to forgive, it is sure a great participation of the divine nature, a direct imitation of God. And then again,

[v.] An aptness to return into amity; for that is a great deal more. There are some that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more: an everlasting pique remaining, and they cannot but discover a shyness, a great shyness, shun them, baulk them, decline them, and are apt still to think hardly and speak hardly of them upon all occasions. But the divine nature in the regenerate makes a person apt to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate; if there have been breaches, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature, by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.

These are great things, and they are plain things; it is impossible if there be such a seed born of God but it must imitate the divine goodness, and if it imitate that goodness it must appear in such instances as these—"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" So we very faintly and defectively render those emphatical words, "will harm you," as if there were a denial of the design or intention or inclination; but it is only a sign of the tense—"who is he that will harm you?" who shall eventually harm you? do that which shall procure you real harm? They shall never (if it be understood aright)—who is that? [you]—not a lump of flesh, but a mind, a spirit, a soul; a being it is true, a body which may be hurt: and yet—*that*" not be hurt: "who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers?" What is meant by followers? There is a following by prosecution, as an end; and there is a following by imitation, as a pattern. The word tells us which is meant there; if you be imitators, it shall be in the power of none eventually to do you any harm. Imitators of what? we read of that which is good; it is (of the good) that which is good carries a man's mind presently to apprehend that it is some created goodness that is there spoken of, that we are to follow; but the following being imitation, it is not enough for a man to imitate any created good, be it never so great, never so high, of never so excellent a kind, I must not imitate that good, but be it, have it, possess it. But the expression is of the good, and so there is none good but God,

"none good but one, that is God." I will take care for my own divine seed and offspring that I have in this world; I will save them from harm, as far as is needful, so as to bring them safe to the everlasting kingdom that I design them to. And why? and upon what account?—Because they are mine; my image is upon them; they are imitators of the good, they resemble the good, they may call the good, Father.

Objection. But all this while it may be said, What sort of thing are you describing? a thing fled from our world? Why, sir, you do but describe an idea, a chimerical thing; where is there such goodness? or, where is there such a good sort of creatures to be found? Sure we must go as high as the regions of bliss to see such a sort of good people.

Answer. Yes, it was this apprehension that made me the more intent to enlarge upon this head, and spend this discourse upon it. This is looked upon as if it were a thing exiled from the world, fled from the earth. But oh! what a dismal mistake and delusion is it if men will enterain such an imagination, that such goodness is to be found no where but in heaven? No, heaven must be let down into our world, or else it will never have any inhabitants out of it, it prepares its own inhabitants first; they that are born again are born from above, from heaven. There must be an heavenly descent, a descent of the divine Spirit from above entering the souls of men, forming them, moulding them, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, writing the divine law there; which in reference to the second table of it is all summed up in this, Love thy neighbour as thyself. Harm another? Why, I can no more do it than I can harm myself. Take pleasure in another's harm? I can no more do it than I can take pleasure in my own. Be spiteful towards another? Am I ever spiteful towards myself? full of malice towards others? Am I ever malicious towards myself? or vindictive or implacable? Regeneration is the writing of the law of God in the heart, impressing the divine image there; love to God will come into another order of heads. But this love, wherein we imitate his, is love to others. Love to men, if it have place in no inhabitants of this earth, there is no more going from earth to heaven. Heaven must make inhabitants for itself in our world, who are to be so prepared and formed as to be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. In this sad degenerate age wherein we live, indeed such goodness is

apprehended too great a rarity to be thought a reality; it is too rare a thing to be taken for a real thing. A very sad case! as indeed conversions are very unfrequent, and it is a fearful thing to consider how long the gospel may be diffused (which should evangelize the world, and transform men into the divine likeness) before it proves the savour of life! How generally it is a deadly savour is dismal to think! And proportionably instances of a regenerating work are rare and unfrequent. And the regenerating principle (where it is) is low and languishing, is not conspicuous, doth not shine forth. The contraries to it do shew forth themselves in so obvious and frequent appearances, that these evidences and fruits of the divine goodness cannot be seen: as it is a very rare thing for persons to come as returning prodigals, renewed, converted, changed, transformed, and to pour out their tears and lamentations and self-bemoanings into a Redeemer's bosom, and by him to their heavenly Father, so it is proportionably rare for Christians to make such discoveries of a good spirit towards one another, to pour out complaints and tears and self-bemoanings into one anothers bosoms: as if there was no such rule as that, confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another; as if that text were thought to have come into the Bible as a casualty, and stood there for nothing. How rare are instances of any such fruit and exemplification of the divine goodness, as to hear it said by any; Oh! friend, Christian brother, I have offended you, I am grieved for it; it grieves me that I have grieved you! Where is this to be found? These things are just such rarities as the return of wandering sinners into the bosom of God through Christ. A sad token of a departing divine Spirit! in a great measure sadly departing, almost gone. Religion would otherwise be another thing; the rules and precepts of it would turn into example more frequently.

But this is one thing, and so great a thing, that it ought not to have been passed over. They that are born of God, bear his image even in this thing, beneficent goodness, a goodness of temper, a benignity which speaks them the children of this Father, so as that their temper cannot change by the greatest malignity that they have experienced, and are many times the subjects of from others. It spends itself upon them, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;" bless them while they curse you, express the greatness of your kindness, love and concern for

them when they are designing to ruin and undo you. And for what? that ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, that you may appear so, that it may be seen that he hath a divine offspring in this world, Matt. v. 44, 45. He doth good to enemies, otherwise what might become of you? Might it have been said of any of you, Oh, if he did not know how to spare an enemy, nay to oblige an enemy, and conquer an enemy by kindness and goodness, what would become of any of us all.

SERMON XLVII*.

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

Now, if after all that hath been said upon this account, I would give you an epitome, or the description of one born of God by this peculiar character, I could not more fitly give it than out of that thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. If it should be enquired what sort of thing is this divine birth, whereof we heard so much which is to be sought out in this world? Since we hear of such productions among men, what sort of thing is it? or what sort of person is he whom it will denominate to be born of God? a divine and heaven-born creature? If any should imagine with themselves a divine creature among men, what must he be? Is he one that doth excel in eloquence more than human, even seraphical, angelical itself? Is he one that can speak with the tongue of men and angels? Is this he? or is it a man of profound speculation, that can search and penetrate into all mysteries? Is it one that abounds in knowledge, so as to comprehend (as far as it is possible to humanity) all knowledge? Is it he that hath so extraordinary a faith that he can work you miracles every hour of the day, and remove a thousand mountains with a breath? Is it one that is a greater miracle himself in this world in respect of the extraordinary good works which he can induce himself to do? And the greater miracle, for that he can do them without any principle, bestow all that he hath,

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all his goods to feed the poor? Is it one that burns in so hot a zeal for this or that private opinion, this conceit, or fancy of his own, that it hath even set his whole soul on fire, and when that is done can be content to sacrifice his body too, and throw that into flames in defence of his opinion? Is it such an one as this, or is that such a thing, a thing born of God? No; it is such a thing as without which all these are mere nothings, will make a man no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, will turn to no account to him in all the world, profit him just nothing, as the Apostle there speaks.

Well, what then is it? It is an habit of soul made up of goodness. It is when a propension to do good is (as it were) all a man's soul. It is such a sort of thing as whereof divine love (which cannot but be from above, from God himself who is love) is the internal constituent form; which therefore runs out into all suitable exercises, appearances, and demonstrations of itself upon all occasions: it is such a sort of thing as suffereth long, and is kind; the wonder lies in the connexion, suffers long and is kind; that being long (as all good men must expect to be more or less in such an evil world as this is) in a suffering state is not soured thereby, not imbittered, not turned into acrimony, suffers long, and is still kind, full of benignity, patient of any evil done him, but inclined to do none to any other.

It is such a thing that envieth not another man's excellency, nor doth boast his own; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, nor is puffed up; it is such a thing that doth not behave itself unseemly, keeps on a steady course, agreeable uniform course, self-agreeable, and therefore cannot allow itself in that which shall be unseemly, unbecoming, unto a discerning or judicious eye; it is such a thing as will suffer a man to have no private interest of his own in opposition to the common interest of the universal Lord of all, or that shall be in a real or actual competition with the rightful good of any other; seeketh not its own things, is not easily provoked, not apt to take offence, not humoursomely captious, so as that none knows how to converse with it or take hold of it; it is such a thing as thinketh no evil, neither thinketh evil of others, nor thinks evil against others; neither apt without cause to take up an ill opinion of another, nor lay designs to do him hurt; it is such a thing as rejoiceth not in iniquity, cannot do so, looks upon the evil of other men with regret, wishes it not to be, and never indulgeth any evil inclination of its own unto private advantage, so as to

have the occasion of glorying, this or that I got by an unlawful act, or by pursuing or prosecuting an unjust design and in an undue course, but such a thing as rejoiceth in the truth, in walking uprightly, in a plain and unexceptionable way. It is finally, such a thing as "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This needs no paraphrase: in sum, it is such a thing as carries eternity in its own nature; to wit, when many extraordinary gifts, glittering excellencies, that were designed but to be temporary and to serve some present purpose, shall fail and vanish and fade away; the gift of tongues, of speculative knowledge, miraculous faith, zeal for opinions, and the like; when they shall all fail, this shall never fail, but go into eternity, hath its glory perfected there, as being the greatest of the three things that are here concomitant, faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

I thus insist that among Christians such a thing as this may not be lightly thought of, as if it were an indifferent and dispensable matter, about which we did not much need to concern ourselves; which is indeed the reproach of the Christian name, and that than which nothing doth more to obstruct and hinder the diffusion and progress of Chris tianity in the world.

It must recommend itself by its own goodness, and by telling men to their own sense, that it is a thing that betters the world, and which, (so far as it doth obtain and take place) brings men discernibly and tends to bring them into a good and happy state, would make this earth a very heaven might it but generally take place in it. And the consideration of other scriptures makes me think this ought to be the more pressed and insisted upon. I shall turn you to a few (but they are most weighty ones) to our present purpose; and I desire you therefore to weigh them accordingly.

If you look to Gal. v. you will find the contraries to this divine principle strangely matched and sorted; to wit, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, in the 20th and 21st verses; you find them sorted with idolatry, witchcraft, adultery, fornication, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. These do keep company; it seems they are not unfit company for one another, or to be sorted and put together.

Let me carry you to another epistle of this same Apostle, Eph. iv. 30, 31, 32, when he had given that great and

tender charge. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;" he immediately subjoins, "Let all bitternes and wrath and anger, and clamour and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all lying." What is the import of all this, but that these things do most directly tend to grieve that Spirit by which we must be sealed (if ever we be sealed up) to the day of redemption; we grieve him whom we expect to comfort us: that is his peculiar title and style, the Spirit of Grace. The pseudo-Christians, or apostates from Christianity (that the Apostle speaks of with so much severity in divers places of that Epistle to the Hebrews) they are such "as crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open shame, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace." The most wicked and mischievous thing in all the world, to spite the Spirit of Grace, the Spirit of all kindness and love, and goodness and benignity. Wherever this work is done, the regenerating work; wherever any are truly said to be born of God, the Spirit is the immediate agent, they are born of the Spirit; being born of water signifies nothing without this. What do you tell me of mere figurative Christianity, mere symbolical Christianity, the sign without the thing! except, besides the being born of water, there be the being born of the Spirit too (signified by that water) you can never enter into the kingdom of God, can never so much as see it: whatsoever tends to spite this Spirit which regenerates, doth certainly very ill agree with the regenerating principle, with the work of regeneration itself; nothing can be more unsuitable to our being born of God than to cherish and indulge that in himself which spites and vexeth and grieves that Spirit which is the immediate agent in his regeneration.

If I should carry you yet a little further to another of that Apostle's epistles, Coloss. iii. "Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" then put on "as the elect of God (holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. But above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which also ye are called in one body; and be thankful." It is a rebellion against the divine call by which we are called in one body to indulge

ourselves in the contraries to the before enjoined things, bowels of mercy, kindness, forgiveness, and the like.

And you may see how agreeably the holy men of God speak about these things one to another. Let me but lead you to what we find from another Apostle, James iii. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." Here are two opposite principles, that which makes the import of this context the more apparently weighty, and of the greatest importance imaginable: the one is said to be from above, and the other from beneath; the one is therefore the regenerate principle, belonging to the new nature unto this divine birth; and the other fetcheth its parentage from hell, so vastly disagreeing, so directly opposite are these two, not as heaven and earth, but as heaven and hell itself. If you have bitter envyings and strife in your heart, glory not, this wisdom is not from above (this same genius, this spirit, wisdom and folly being the characters of good men and bad in the ordinary language of scripture) this wisdom that is cognate with evil. Envy and strife and wrath and bitterness, is of no heavenly descent, it descends not from above, it hath no kindred, no alliance with those calm, serene, pure, and peaceful regions. No; quite contrary, but it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, so that in contests there will not be a perpetual insisting, inflexibly, I am in the right, and I will not yield an hair: and the other as stiff as he, No, I am in the right, and I will yield as little as you. This wisdom is not from above, it is from beneath; that which is from above is easy to be entreated, can tell how to yield when it is opportune, and when the case manifestly requires it. And so the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace (that hath agreeable soil wherein it will take) with them that love peace.

And to bring you back at last to this same Apostle from

whom we took our text; do but look back to the third chapter of this epistle, how mighty a stress is laid upon this one thing, divine love among Christians as brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life, in that we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And I have told you in the beginning of this discourse, that it ought to be remote from us to think him only a brother that is of our own opinion or persuasion, or party. But as all are brethren upon one common account, so go to the more peculiar and special account, all good men are brethren upon that account, all that bear the same divine image, all that do appear born from above. And he that so loveth not his brother, abideth in death. A killing word it should be unto the contrary principle, that is apt to break forth in continual vexatious and grievous things towards them that are brethren.

And if you look back in the same chapter, to the tenth verse, you see what his theme is: he is distinguishing those that are born of God from the rest of the world. "Whosoever is born of God," verse 9, doth not commit sin; doth not industriously set himself to pursue or persist in an evil and forbidden course, doth not make sin, is not a worker of iniquity, that is not his trade (as many men's callings are denominated from the things they make,) one in whom wickedness is the governing thing, and with whom it is an habitual thing, it runs through his life: but he that is born of God is no sin-maker, is not a worker of iniquity. But how are such distinguished from them that are not such? Why, in this the children of God (that are born of God) are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. Taking this in as a matter so intimately conjunct with the divine life, wheresoever it is, love to one's brother, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are manifest in this; to wit, that they who are the children of God, they do work righteouness; he that doth not so is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother; he hath that principle in him that speaks him to abide in death, the divine life hath not yet obtained, hath not yet a place in him.

Objection. But it may be said, It is impossible that the regenerating spirit should exist and have being at all where these contraries are to be found?

Answer. In short, it must be said, not where they govern, not where they ordinarily prevail, this divine creature of

which I am speaking, this creature born of God, take it in the whole complex of it, it is so Christ-like a thing, that sometimes in scripture it bears his very name, it is called Christ, "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. And if you will consider it in its similitude to Christ, and under that name (as the scripture doth warrant us, even to place the very name upon this thing) then where it is amidst these prevailing contraries (as they may be for the present prevailing, though they do not habitually prevail) it may be (as I may say) Christ crucified, Christ in torture, Christ nailed on the cross, and Christ put to open shame, where such things do appear, break forth, and come in view: nothing is more plain. So that of all things in the world that can come under common notice, this is what Christians should abhor from, and studiously take care of, that if they will name that worthy name, if they will court to be denominated by it, they may not reproach that name, and throw dishonour and infamy upon him whose name they bear; as if Christianity were to get nothing but ignominy by their being called Christians.

This, therefore, is a further resemblance of God that is to be found in them that are born of him; or that we must expect to be impressed upon the divine birth, it is a creature (as it were) made up of goodness.

I shall go on with some other that yet remains to be spoken to.

Tenthly, This creature, born of God, it is evidently characterized by its constant aspirings to the perfection of the heavenly state; and therein it hath the image on it of his divine Parent, whom we are taught to consider and conceive of as having his glorious residence above, as the remanifesting and displaying his glory, and most fully communicating himself; and are taught when we apply to him, to apply to him under that notion, as our Father who is in heaven. And this same divine principle is itself from above; he that is born (ανωθεν) from above, it is he only that can see, can enter into the kingdom of God: this divine principle prompts them to look upwards.

There is therefore a character of heavenliness upon this creature. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (says the Apostle Peter) who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope (hope is there objectively taken, as the next words put in opposition do shew) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for

us." This creature, as it is born from heaven, so it is born to heaven, or for heaven. There is an heavenliness imprest upon it, thither it tends, thither it breathes, thither it aspires, flies upwards as the sparks do, it labours to be gathered up into the region of good souls and spirits, where all are perfected together. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit do groan (aspire within themselves) waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, that is waiting for the ultimate perfection of the state they are born for and designed unto. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit, to wit, all the regenerate, as soon as they come to be regenerate, they have received the first fruits of the Spirit, then they begin to aspire, as soon as they are born they breathe, and as soon as they breathe they breathe upwards, heavenward. They that have received the first fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly, or within themselves, for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body; they aspire for this, and for the state that doth belong to them as sons, and the perfection of it.

It is to be observed that adoption in the theological sense of it may be taken two ways, as in the civil we find that among the Romans there were two sorts of adoptions, or two degrees of it rather. There was first the private adoption, when any did give but some private intimation or signification that he intended to take such an one for his son, but there was afterwards the public or forensick adoption, when the person was adopted by such an one *in foro*, when it was made a public act, and accordingly inrolled in their public records. And so is the complete and consummate glory of the resurrection, of the risen state, here called the adoption. Another verse in that viii. Rom.—19, compared with verse 23, calls it the manifestation of the sons of God, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the time and season for the manifestation of the sons of God: when they shall be owned to be his sons, when it shall be openly declared and known who they are. And this is the state that they who have received the first fruits of the Spirit do aspire to; so as to be content with nothing beneath, or on this side that: I am born an heir to glory, or the ultimate perfection of that state to which I am born, and whereof by divine designation I am capable, to that I aspire, and can take up with nothing beneath it, nothing short of it. They that continually grovel in the dust of this earth, never think an higher or a nobler thought, are these born of God? are these of the divine offspring? What an inconsistency and

absurdity is that! They that perpetually mind earthly things, have no business in this world but to feed, and dress, and please their flesh, without any thought or concern for the immortal spirit. Are they born of God? No; they that are so born, so well born, have aspirations suitable to the nobility of their birth and parentage, thither they aspire.

But as the things hitherto mentioned are imitations or resemblances of God, in respect of such of his excellencies as are wont to pass under the name or notion of communicable for the most part, I shall name some more that go under the notion more strictly of incommunicable, wherein, though there is not that similitude, yet there is some correspondence: as with respect to the infiniteness of God, I shall give an instance therein. And with respect to his self-sufficiency, under that head I shall only speak to these two things; and though there is not so proper a similitude and likeness, yet there is some correspondence in this divine birth, as such things as these belonging to the very being of God. As there is,

Eleventhly, An unlimited largeness of spirit; not infiniteness in the positive sense, but a negative sort of infiniteness, of unboundedness, in particular respects that I shall mention to you.

i. There is an unlimitedness, so as not to be confined to this present world. No, saith one that is born of God, it is too little a thing, too scant a thing. One born of God hath thereupon a spirit too big for all this world. As that worthy said, I earnestly protested I would not be put off with such a portion. This earth is too little a thing for me, (saith one that is born of God,) I cannot be confined to it. Nor,

ii. Can such an one be confined to time: his prospect is still larger, he looks forward, "he seeks for honour, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life." Rom. ii. 7. And,

iii. He is not confined in respect of any degrees of truly divine knowledge and grace, he never knows so much in that kind but he still covets to know more; and he never hath so much of grace and the image of God, but he still affects to have more. And,

iv. He is unconfined in respect of service unto him whose he is, unto his divine Parent. It is his interest, I must serve while I have any being. And he always thinks he hath never done enough if he hath done much, for he reckons himself still under obligation to do more. So it is with one that is born of God. And then,

Twelfthly, He resembles God in his self sufficiency. This

most incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being, to be self-sufficient. One that is born of God hath a subordinate self-sufficiency, to wit, by gracious vouchsafement he hath that in himself, with which he is content: not in exclusion to God, but to inferior things, to the creature. The good man is satisfied from himself, he is constituted a fountain to himself. Prov. xiv. 24. A fountain fed from an higher fountain. God hath made him a living spring within himself, so that he needs not another; doth not need to depend upon this or that, or the other creature; so as to reckon that if he lose that he is undone. As that wretch cried out, "Ye have taken away my gods, (meaning his idols,) and what have I more?" Every unregenerate person hath some such idol or other, which he reckons his all. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? When the world is gone, when honour and grandeur are gone, when wealth and riches, this or that pleasant seat gone, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? No, the regenerate soul hath learnt that doctrine, *ne* . . . . . I do not need to range, to forage; if I can enjoy God at home in my own soul, I have enough. Such a kind of self-sufficiency as that of Jacob, he had all; when Esau compliantly said to him, "I have enough;" but I, saith he, have all. So the apostle, Phil. iv. 18, "I have all, and abound." Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; there is the emphasis. Thou shalt have my presence, God will always render himself present, will never leave them, nor forsake them. Therefore be content with what you have. There is a self-sufficiency belonging to a good man, in exclusion to external good things, he can live without them.

But how will your body live without them? Why, may such an one say, I can live with that, I am such a sort of creature, as can be in the body, and be out of the body; it is not necessary for me to live in this flesh, my God is my all, and he is pleased to join himself intimately, inwardly to me, and in him I have all. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides thee.

These are so many manifest imitations and resemblances of God that are to be found in this divine creature, who is born of him; and all these things (as you might take notice) do belong to this regenerate, heaven-born soul, as God is his Parent. But (as I told you) the relation is mutual, out of this divine birth results the relation, and relation is mutual

between God and them. He is a Father to them, and they children to him; paternity and filiation do enforce one another. Is God a Father to them? Then he must in begetting them, and when they are born of him, impress on them such characters as resemble him. But then are they also his children, then must there be also such things found in them as do answer their relation to God as such; there must be childlike dispositions towards him of whom they are begotten. Several things will come under that head; as the dependance of children, the love of children towards their Father, they love him that begat, there is love immediately towards him that begat them. To pretend to be born of God, and not love him, is of all things the most contradictious, absurd, and self-confuting pretence. Then there is the reverence of him as their Father; honour thy father and mother. If I be a father, where is my honour? There must be obedience to him as their Father. Children, obey your parents in the Lord; and be subject to the Father of spirits, that you may live. It is mortal to you not to be subject; to rebel is to die; to disobey is to declare yourself none of the family, it is even to protest against the relation.

The mentioning of all these things, one would think, should occasion many throbbing hearts among us. If God have such a work as this to do in this world, to raise up a divine offspring to himself among men; and if that gospel which he hath sent is to be the regenerating instrument. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth," Jas. i. 18, that we might be a nobler sort of creatures. A more glorious sort than the rest of the miscreant world are: if the case be so, then while I live under the gospel, which is appointed on purpose for begetting children to God, what do I find done upon my soul? What impressions are there, wherein I do differ from other men? Is there no difference between the children of God and the children of that other father, that worst of fathers? Is there no difference between heaven and hell? Some do think we can confound and mingle them. Oh, methinks, it should cause great palpitations of heart. What do I find inwrought into my soul, that looks like a divine nature? One born of God, and that may suit and answer the end for which he sent his Son to be a Jesus, and Jesus to be a Christ in this world, by faith to be acknowledged and owned as such? That must be an high and noble design! It challengeth very deep and searching thoughts of heart to be employed about it. What

is doing of it in my soul? When we see how little is done, how little effect the gospel hath, what a miscarrying womb it is for the most part, it may make many a sad misgiving heart among us. What, hath God no children to raise up in our days, and in this part of the world? Hath he done with the converting of souls? Begetting and regenerating them in his own image, when they go from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year, with the same unregenerate hearts, just what they were under the ministration which is appointed to minister life and spirit to souls? To remain still the same that one was, what will the issue of this be? What, if time should expire with us now?

SERMON XLVIII.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

I shall now return to what was the last time only intimated; to wit, That as this being born of God doth not only infer that he is a Father to them, and that, therefore, he must in this work beget such things in them as do resemble him; so herein also they become children to him; and therefore in this work there must be such impressions made in them, and upon their spirits, as are suitable to their relation as children; childlike dispositions towards him as their Father, must be understood to be inwrought; and they are such as these.

First. An high honour and reverence for him. This is suitable to their state as children born of God, that they have high and honourable thoughts of him. If parents, as such do claim this from their children, most of all the supreme Parent must. It is even, in reference to inferior relatives in this kind and under this denomination, a law of nature. Honour thy father and thy mother. It cannot be supposed, that they that are born of God should be so unnatural children to their divine and heavenly Parent as not to have him in the highest honour. "If I be a Father, where is mine honour," saith he, Mal. i. 6. It requires to be deeply and sadly considered under what notion are we here: Is it not under the notion of God's children? To pretend ourselves to be such, and not to have the highest veneration and honour for our

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divine Parent, is a contradiction and a mockery; it is an interpretative disowning and disclaiming the relation. It is more than saying, it is a signifying practically, that we are none of his children, if we most highly honour him not in our hearts and souls. What must be said in this case by them who go from day to day, and not so much as a thought, least of all a great thought, an adoring and honouring thought of that God whose children they pretend to be!

Secondly. Another childlike disposition towards him that must be in them that are born of him, is a depending disposition; their hearts being formed to dependence. There is nothing more childlike than to depend upon a parent, the wisdom of a parent, the care and conduct of a parent, this is childlike. Do I say I am born of God? Do I then live a depending life? How is the habit of my soul? Is it formed to dependence if I in every thing contrive for myself without reference to him; never thinking I have a Father above that concerns himself in my affairs? doth this speak being born of God, or doth it not speak quite contrary? Trusting him with all our concerns, is that which such a relation claims, and doth involve and include in it, which therefore implies, that nothing can be so agreeable and (as it were) connatural unto the spirit of one born of God, as a praying disposition; for that is a depending disposition; if prayer be not a mere form, and nothing else, a piece of empty formality, it must carry dependence in it. It is no prayer wherein there is not dependence and expectation still included. To them that are God's children nothing can be more agreeable than to live a prayerful life, to be much in prayer; this is dependence, this speaks dependence, in every case presently to run to our Father. "I will go and spread all before him: for my love, they are my enemies, but I give myself to prayer, saith the Psalmist." Ps. cix. 4. So we translate it, but there is no more in the Hebrew text, but "I prayer," as if he were all composed of prayer, made up of prayer; let other men take their own courses, (as if he had said,) this is mine, I am for prayer.

It is under this notion that our Saviour directs prayer, (which also in the days of his flesh he so much practised himself,) "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father that seest in secret, and he shall reward thee openly." Matt. vi .6. What, have I a Father, and shall I not pray to him? A Father in heaven, a heavenly Father, and not pray to him? What a self-contradicting pretence is that in them that say, God is their

Father, that they are born of him, but know not what belongs to prayer, and to that dependence upon him which is exprest in prayer! And there are two things, or two heads of things, in reference whereunto this dependence is to have its exercise, to wit, in reference to our present and temporary concernments, and in reference to our future and eternal concernments.

i. In reference to our present and temporary concernments here in this world: The dependence of a child will not allow him to be excessively solicitous; so to torture himself with vexatious cares, to take thought with anxiety what he shall eat, and drink, and put on; for after all these thing do the Gentiles seek: to wit, with anxiety, as if the press and weight lay wholly upon themselves, "but your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." Matt. vi. compared with Luke xii. 36. Why, have you not a Father, and doth he not know what you need? You are to use a prudent care in the way of your duty; but you are not to use a tormenting care, a care that doth no good, but hurt only; a care that cannot add one cubit to your stature. Take heed of such a care, it doth not consist with the relation of children to an heavenly Father. And,

ii. In reference to our eternal concernments. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Do not fear. Are you the children of such a father, and will not your father provide for you as his own children? Yes, he will provide for you after the rate of a kingdom; he will make you communicate in the kingdom, if you depend upon his pleasure. And it is a thing he doth with pleasure. He pleaseth himself in it, in that display and manifestation of his glory, and munificent bounty. I will now declare openly to the world that I own these for my children; then is "the manifestation of the sons of God," (as the expression is Rom. viii. 19.) When all the sons of God are to have an open, compleat, formal, magnificent adoption declared before angels and men. This is that which the depending spirit of his children prompts them to expect. And they exercise dependence this way, and exert it upon this account in reference to their eternal concernments. I find there are no great things to be had here in this world, by which God distinguisheth his children from other men; he doth not distinguish them by what they are to possess and enjoy of external good things here; and they are taught to lay no great stress upon any such things; but they are taught to depend upon a kingdom for ample provision hereafter, wherein he will deal

with them like a God. And it is their Father's pleasure to give them this kingdom, and upon this they are to depend. It will go well enough with me hereafter, and therefore I am little solicitous what occurs to, or befalls, me in my present transient state. Again,

Thirdly. Another child-like disposition that must be found in them that are born of God, is love. Love to him as their Father. He is an unnatural monster, and not a child, that doth not love his father and parent: and you see how express the words of this very verse are to this purpose, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him." You see how this is connected with what goes immediately before, taking it for granted, that he that "is born of God, loveth him that begat him." It is not affirmed, but supposed; it is not directly affirmed, as if it needed an affirmation. This being obvious to every one's view and thoughts, that for all them that are born of God, they must love him that begat them, a thing that follows of course. Are you born of God? Then you do love him that begat you.

And whereas we are told (as you have had sometimes occasion given to take notice, chap. iii. of this epistle,) "by this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The children of God cannot be manifest in distinction from them that are of another parentage, in any thing more than this, their "loving him that begat." Loving him of whom they are born, as it is a trying, so it is, and ought to be a satisfying character in them in whom it is found. If they are to judge of their estate, Am I one born of God, yea or no? They may comfortably conclude well concerning this, I find a divine love springing in my soul towards him, my love working Godward, working upward shews me my descent, of whom I am, who it is that begat me. Oh, the wretched case of those souls that cannot evince their relation to God as their Father, as being born of him by such a character as this. Do I say God is my Father? Alas, I love him not, I have no love for him. If it be said, as Christ tells the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," how must that sink the soul and spirit of that man, in him that pretends to that relation to God as a father, when his own heart testifies that he loves him not?

Love to the most obvious exertions of that love, wherein it discovers and manifests itself. Many might be spoken of, and have been heretofore. I shall only mention these

two at present, delight in his converse, and concern for his interest: these are expressions of a child-like love to God as a father.

i. Delight in his converse. Have I any love for him as my father, when I cannot endure to be conversant with him? When I decline his presence, I keep up no intercourse with him, I live a wandering life. Is this like a child of God, one born of God? Oh, sadly consider it, and take it to heart! We hear this day of such trials as these; but we shall know and see a trying day at last, that must put the everlasting differences between those that were born of God, and those that were never born of him. And even now, if we do but state a judgment day in our own souls, and erect a tribunal there, what can carry more evidence and convictiveness in it than this, if we would but deal impartially with ourselves. Upon this question, do I love the divine presence, yea or no; is he my father, and do I flee his presence, and care not to be in it, when I have no pretence of necessity? I cannot pretend a necessity to be out of his presence, as a child may have to be out of his earthly father's presence. He cannot always be there; but the matter admits of no excuse or pretence,—it can be resolved into nothing but disaffection. I may be in the presence of God more, but I will not. You may be with him as soon as you can think a thought. Here is nothing to be said in this case, but an aversion of heart keeps you off from him. And what? Is he your father, and will you say you are born of him? How can a man satisfy his mind, his judgment, and conscience, in such inconsistencies and contradictions as these. And,

ii. Concern for his interest. This is child-like love to be deeply concerned, whether he be feared or no, honoured or no, obeyed or no, in those that are indeed his children. How doth such affection as this, a filial affection, child-like love, discover itself? How is it wont to do so? "Horror hath taken hold of me (saith the Psalmist,) because of the wicked that forsake thy law. I saw transgressors, and was grieved. Rivers of tears run down my eyes, because of the wicked that transgress thy law." This is a filial sense, the sense of a child, of one born of God; but to feel no regret in a man's spirit, when the contempt of our father discovers itself openly in the face of the sun, when we are so repeatedly told every day, which way soever we look or listen, our father hath little interest in the world, he is little regarded, men little concern themselves whether he is pleased or displeased; for men to have hearts as

stones, unconcerned, never affected in such cases as these, is this child-like? Doth this carry the signification with it of my being a child of God, born of him? Again,

Fourthly. Another child-like disposition towards God as a father, which must be in them that are born of him, is a subject-spirit, an obedientiall frame of spirit towards him. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Eph. vi. 1. A due obedience even to earthly parents, the fathers of our flesh, not of our souls (they were never capable of producing such a thing in us as an intelligent immortal spirit,) yet this is a right challenged unto them. And what? Is it not a right to our celestial Father, to obey him and to be subject to him? To be willingly and of choice under his government, under his rule and law? He that is the parent of our life and being, he that hath given me a being, shall not he give me a law? He that hath given me a spirit, shall not he give me a command to be received from his mouth? Oh, when a man's life is nothing else but rebellion, insolent rebellion, will not such an one be confounded within himself, if he be put to answer the question, Is God your Father? Are you one of his children, or are you not? "How much more (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 9,) shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" You have had fathers of your flesh (saith he,) and they chastised us, and ye gave them reverence: shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? How came I to have a spirit in me, an intelligent immortal spirit, such a sort of being as can think, that is by so noble powers distinguished from a clod, a piece of clay? How came I to have such a being? And if there be a superadded divine principle, so as that God is my father, not only having fashioned my spirit in me, put an immortal understanding spirit in me, but by giving a principle of holiness also in superaddition thereunto; I am under a double obligation to him to own him as my Father; and then shall I not be in subjection to the Father of my spirit! And when life lies upon it, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? What doth that imply, but that it is mortal to disobey, mortal not to be subject? If you will not be subject, ye die for it; every one must be subject or perish. Subjection and perdition, they are the disjunctive, and between them any one may make his choice. Oh, what shall they say, that have never yet had hearts taught to obey, formed to subjection? That despise to be governed, that live after their own will, that contest for the governing power with him that gave

them breath, saying in practice, I will not obey, I will live as I list, I will chuse my own way and course. This cannot stand with this relation; it cannot stand with being born of God; it cannot stand with the foregoing character last mentioned, love to him, filial love to him; "For this is the love of God (as you see presently in the context,) that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." This is the sense of a child, one born of God (as the next words again do import,) "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." Therefore his commandments are not grievous to such an one; he is "born of God," he hath a divine nature in him, that contempers him to the law and commands of God, so that he counts nothing grievous that God commandeth. When every thing that he commands, and the whole state of his government is looked upon as a grievance, it is a grievance to be under the restraint of his law, that I may not live as I list, that I may not indulge inclinations, covetous inclinations, wrathful inclinations, envious inclinations, vindictive inclinations; no, I cannot be governed, I must have my will. Then you are no child, then you are not born of God. He is not your father, if you will not be ruled; indeed he despiseth that obedience that proceeds not from love. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;" to obey him placidly and of choice, so that this is the sense of the soul, I had rather obey than not obey. It is a privilege to be under his government. If this be not the sense of the soul, it is the absurdest contradiction imaginable to pretend to be born of God; it is a pretence that overthrows and destroys itself, to say I am born of God, but I will not be ruled by him.

Thus far you have an account what this being born of God imports; and now you have both parts of the text in some measure opened—what it is to believe Jesus to be the Christ, and what it is to be born of God. Now, that which in the next place was proposed to be also spoken to according to the order of discourse, is,

II. The connexion between these two. And I shall upon this head endeavour these two things,

1. To shew that there is a connexion, a most firm connexion between them. And then,

2. To shew you the grounds of it.

1. That there is such a connexion; which is but indeed to evince the truth of the assertion which the text contains, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." To evince to you the connexion between these two,

is but to evince the truth of the thing asserted, and which is but the same thing in sense with this, that there is no such thing as an unregenerate believer: that with true believing, regeneration is co-extent. Nobody doth justly bear the name of a believer of this, that Jesus is the Christ, of a believer in Christ, but one that is born of God; or that any other believing that Jesus is the Christ, not accompanied with regeneration, goes for nothing, if I should never so peremptorily avow it, that I believe Jesus to be the Christ, and yet am not born of God, it avails me nothing, it signifies nothing to me. I had as good have said nothing, as to say I believe Jesus to be the Christ, if I be not born of God; nothing as to any valuable purpose that can serve. This is that, in the first place, I am to evince to you, that there is such a connexion between these two, and it is to be evinced by sundry considerations, which I shall endeavour to set before you. As,

(1.) Other scriptures do most expressly say the same thing. Look at John i. 12, 13. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again,

(2.) The relation of sonship to God is connected with this faith, and therefore the participation of that nature in respect whereof we are said to be born of God, must be connected with this faith also: for it is not to be supposed that adoption and regeneration can be separated: whom God adopteth he regenerateth; whosoever believeth, he adopteth. This is the strength of the argument of the consideration that I am now offering to you. Do but look back a little to the 23d and 24th verses of the 2d chapter of this epistle, and you find that it is upon this faith that God owns us as his children, or our having an interest in him as our father doth depend, to wit, "that Jesus is the Christ." Upon our owning of this truth (if it be sincerely and truly owned) this is the consequence, that we now have God for our father: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son (this is manifestly meant though not expressed in our copies, and therefore you have it subjoined in a different character) hath the Father also." That acknowledgeth the Son—How? That he is the Christ (as all the drift of the apostle sheweth) he hath the Father, he hath God for his father, he hath no father else; but with having an interest in God as his father, his being related to God as his child, is the participation of the divine nature, connected; as you see in the close of the

same chapter, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Whereupon it immediately followeth, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" See the series of discourse here: in the latter part of that second chapter, "he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also;" God is his father; he may say, I have a father, an heavenly Father, I have God for my Father: if he acknowledge the Son, believe him to be the Christ, if he sincerely do so. But observe, what the character of such an one must be, he must be able to evince that he is born of God, by doing righteousness as he is righteous; that he hath an holy rectitude inwrought into his spirit, which is become the fixed habit of his soul; otherwise it is an absurd pretence that he is born of God, or that he hath God for his father. And the same thing is as manifest in that mentioned John i. 12, 13; he that receiveth him hath the privilege presently to be called the son of God. But doth that privilege go alone? or, is sonship to God an empty relation? or, hath that relation no foundation? Yes, it hath a foundation—"which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If they are believers in his name, they are sons, they are called sons, they are presently in that relation. But how in relation? is it a nominal relation only? no; but a real one; founded upon being born of God, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is a second consideration to evince this connexion, to wit, that relation goes with this faith, and therefore the participation of a suitable nature must go with this faith also; for adoption and regeneration cannot be separated. And,

(3.) Exemption from condemnation—that hath a certain connexion with the sincere belief of this, that Jesus is the Christ; and therefore regeneration must be certainly connected therewith too. They that have this faith are exempt from condemnation, "shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life," as our Saviour speaks, John iii. 24. And who are they that are exempt from condemnation? according to the determination we have so positively set down, Rom. viii. 1, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." You know that there is no being in Christ Jesus, but by believing in him, believing him to be the Christ with such a faith as thereupon drawing the soul into union with him. But do

you think that any are exempt from condemnation besides the regenerate, or those that are born of God?

(4.) Title to eternal life and glory is connected with this faith; and therefore regeneration must be connected with it too: "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life." He that believeth with this faith hath that life in possession which shall be everlasting life, as one end of the thread that runs into eternity; that life that admits of no intermission, but hath the beginnings of it already—"he that believeth in me shall never die," as our Saviour saith, John ii. 26. He hath that life in him that shall never expire. But can any think they have an actual title to eternal life, to the glories hereafter to be revealed, who are not sons, who are not born of God? It is an inheritance, and who shall inherit but sons? it is called so many and many times. 1 Pet. i. 3, the apostle solemnly blesseth God for "having begotten them again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The title to this everlasting blessedness and glory and life is connected with this faith; but it is plain it is also connected with sonship to God; and therefore it is equally connected with regeneration, wherein the sonship hath its foundation, for none can be sons that are not born of him.

(5.) Both this faith and regeneration do owe themselves to the same primary sovereign cause, the divine Spirit, which shews them most strictly to be connected. This faith is from the Holy Ghost, and this new birth is from the Holy Ghost also; there is but one cause of both, they are produced by the agency of one and the same Spirit, and therefore cannot but be connected. This faith, wherever it is, is a God-begotten thing; it is a thing that is of divine descent. When the apostle Peter owns Christ so expressly, Matt. xvi. 16, 17, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," (which is the faith the text speaks of)—"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And how plainly are we told, 1 Cor. xii. 3, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, (which is the same thing as to say, he is the Christ; Lord being the known title of the Mediator's office, and of the Messiah in the New Testament, and in many places of the Old) but by the Holy Ghost." And is not the same Holy Ghost the immediate author of the work of regeneration? "Except a man be born again"

of the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The same Spirit that begets faith, the same Spirit regenerates the soul into the divine image and likeness by which they are born of God. And,

(6.) The same gospel is the means of the one and the other, of begetting this faith, and of this same divine birth. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," of the gospel; and it is the same gospel, as the means, that souls are regenerate and born again. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18; and 1 Pet. i. 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," that word "that liveth and abideth for ever"—when all flesh, as the grass, withers; "and this is that word," (saith he) "which by the gospel is preached unto you." It is by it you are born again, so that there is a connexion too in the secondary, or instrumental cause, the gospel, as well as in the first and most noble cause, the Spirit of God.

(7.) There is a connexion in one and the same effect, as for instance, victory over the world. Every one that is a sincere believer is a victor over this world too. You may see both a little below the text in this same chapter, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? or, the Christ, which is all one. And then there is,

(8.) A connexion in respect of the end of the one and the other. What any are supposed to be brought to by this faith, it can never be brought about, or the end at which that agency can never be attained, but by intervening regeneration. Why is God so solicitous to have men brought to this faith in this world? Why were there commissions so early given forth for christianizing the world? "Go, and teach all nations"—and let this be the sum of what is taught—"Repent and believe the gospel." Why is this faith to be spread through the world? It was certainly for the honour and glory both of the Father and the Son; but shall either be glorified by having in this world only an unregenerate race, professing faith in Christ, but being like other men? More may be said of this hereafter. But, oh! that in the mean time it might be seriously thought of, what we live under the gospel for, and what we are called unto the profession of the christian name for? No valuable end can be so much as thought of, that will even be reached

without being born of God. I know not what God is doing among us at this day; we hear little, in comparison, of his ways on souls, what is done upon the hearts and spirits of men; we know the Christian name is generally professed among us, we all go under one denomination of Christians; but, oh! think, think again and again, what an unregenerate Christian will come to at last! a Christian, and not born of God! a Christian, and nothing of the divine nature in me, no likeness to God, no filial disposition towards him. If we have a gospel amongst us that hath made us nothing else but Christians in name, nominal Christians, shall our felicity hereafter be like our Christianity here? Will we be content with that? Will the shadow of heaven serve our turn? That will prove a real hell. And there will be a like reality in our heaven as there is in our Christianity.

SERMON XLIX.*

1 JOHN V. 1.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

We shall now go on to shew in the next place,

2. What connexion this is; or, to let you see how these two are connected with one another—Believing "Jesus to be the Christ," and being "born of God." And, to any thinking, considering mind, this cannot but be a very desirable thing, when we meet with such a positive affirmation as this, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," to be able to perceive the very juncture, the very point of coincidence, between these two, wherein they do meet, and (as it were) run into one another; for otherwise it may seem strange to have the one of these so expressly affirmed of the other. And one that hath no discerning of this same juncture may say, How should this be, that there should be such an assertion of so great a thing concerning them that do "believe Jesus to be the Christ?" This seems to be one of the easiest things in the world, to believe Jesus to be the Christ. And I would fain know (may such an one say) how it should come to pass, that a man cannot believe Jesus to be the Christ, but he must have so great a thing as this said of him, that he is born of God? Wherein hath the

* Preached August 12, 1694.

one so much to do with the other, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God?

That alone which makes the matter seem strange and difficult is, that men generally have too low thoughts of this same faith. This believing in particular Jesus to be the Christ, the difference lies here, whether this believing is to be reckoned a divine, or merely an human thing: If it be looked upon as a thing of mere human original, then any body would wonder that upon one's believing Jesus to be the Christ, such a thing as this should be said of him, he is born of God, the greatest thing sure that can be said of a mortal creature! But we are taught to reckon this faith to be a divine thing, of divine original. When the apostle Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, professeth this faith, Who am I? saith our Saviour? whom do ye say I am? (when there were various opinions of the people about him at that time, and some said one thing and some said another) but "whom do you say that I am?" Why, saith Peter, "thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. And then in verse 17, our Saviour replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:" thou art a blessed man. Why is he blessed for this? "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." All the question is, whether this faith we have about this thing be a self-sprung faith, or an heaven-sprung faith; if it be self-sprung, then it is only the product of flesh and blood, but flesh and blood cannot reach so high as to produce any such faith as this, neither his own flesh and blood; which signifies his human nature; nor the same nature as it is among others, by transmitting whereof from one to another this faith would only be a traditional thing; but the product of flesh and blood which cannot reveal such a thing; but if it be such a faith as is immediately from himself, then blessed art thou that so believest; this faith is not from thee or other men, no way from flesh and blood, or human nature, but from my Father which is in heaven.

And then it will cease to be thought a strange thing, that he that so believes should be said to be born of God; for this being born of God, it is but the work of the divine power working the soul to a conformity to himself, and impressing it with its own image. And this faith it seems is from God too, as well as the great conforming change that then passeth upon the soul when one is brought to believe. And this will make it appear the most reasonable thing in the world, that he that by the divine power and

grace is brought to believe is born of God; for if it be from God that men are made so to believe, it is not faith from itself, but of God's own ingenerating in my soul. Then it must be considered, if God do this work to make me believe with this faith, he doth it for some end worthy of God, for there is no rational agent but works for an end; and he that is the most perfectly intelligent, the most absolutely perfect and all comprehending mind, cannot but have the greatest and highest designs in what he doth by his own immediate operation. And therefore he must be understood to have done this work, in making a man thus to believe for an end suitable to himself, worthy of God. And then, I pray, what end worthy of him can be attained, by making a man to believe, if he do not (as it were) new beget him at the same time? He is capable of serving no end, no valuable end, no great end, no end wherein he shall at once be serviceable to God and happy in himself, if God do not regenerate him.

But look to these two things more narrowly, and you will see how they meet, and how close a jointure there is between them, so as the matter will be above dispute. It will make its way into every mind that considers the case duly and aright, "That he that believes Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" and in order hereunto (that this may make its way with more advantage,) you may consider how fully that which is equivalent is said of the same thing. Do but look to chap. iv. of this epistle, and the 15th verse, "Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Pray consider it; what is this less than that such a man is born of God? The divine fulness is come in upon him. God and he do in-dwell one another. Whoever he is that confesseth, believingly confesseth that this "Jesus is the Son of God;" for this is all one as believing Jesus to be the Christ. We find them often put together to signify the same; that if one be expressed, the other is implied, as in that Matt. i. 16, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;" and so John vi. 69, "We believe, and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God." And again, John xx. last verse, "These things are written (this book I have now written—this gospel is written all for this purpose,) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through his name." And you may easily apprehend, that confessing this implies the belief of it. No man that is sincere will

confess what he doth not believe; "Whosoever doth confess so much that this Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is no less a thing than being born of God.

And that we may pursue our scope the more closely, let us but cast our eye upon the two parts that are said to be conjoined. And here I must remind you only of what in general was said about this believing "Jesus to be the Christ;" to wit, that it is not one single and incomplex thing, but that it is complicated of more things than one. As,

(1.) This believing Jesus to be the Christ, it speaks a vivid, strong, heart-assured persuasion, that the thing is true; of the truth of the thing, not as taken up at random, but as taken up from the divine testimony. And because (as it followeth in the same chapter) this is the record that God hath given us of his Son, it is believed that Jesus is the Christ, not because men have told us so, it is received "not as the word of man, but as the word of God." 1 Thess. ii. 13. And in the 10th verse of this chapter, "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." And,

(2.) This believing doth by consequence imply the opening of the heart to him, to receive him as such. Believing and receiving him are inseparable; as you see when the same thing is predicated of this same subject, John i. 12, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Pray, why do they that so believe in his name as to receive him, bear the title of "the sons of God?" He gives them all the privilege to be his sons, why is that? The next words tell you, without which it had been very absurd to have such an appellation. Why are believers so called the Sons of God? Is it an empty name and title? No, they are born of God, who were "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Sure they must be his sons that are born of him; but they that believe in him, so as to receive the Son of God, that faith opening its way into their hearts, they are said to be born, not of the will of man, but of God. That heart-assuring persuasion concerning him, presently makes the soul open to him, and entertain him; take him in and appropriate him, and say, "My Lord and my God," so as that he comes to have an in-dwelling in the soul by that faith.

And then do but consider what was generally said concerning being born of God, that it makes that person of

whom this can be truly said, a God-like creature. He is transformed by it into the divine image and likeness; it is an universal change, and a permanent one passing upon the soul, and continuing in it even to the end, by which he is made a God-like creature; to wit, by which his image is anew impressed and restored in this soul. And these things being finished, let us now consider how inseparable these must needs be, so believing Jesus is the Christ, and being born of God.

Take this faith, as it is such a firm persuasion, an heart-assuring persuasion, upon the authority of God himself, that this Jesus is the Christ, or is his Son. Take it thus, and there are two things in the matter believed, that give it the advantage to be so powerfully operative in the soul when so believed, as you have heard. Therefore consider distinctly the matter believed, and the nature of this believing it so as it hath been opened to you. The matter believed, when a man believeth this Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God (for believing him to be the Christ involves the belief of his deity, of his divine nature, in respect whereof he is said to be God's own Son, in the most eminent sense, the only begotten Son of God, which can signify no less than that he is God.) Why, about this you have two things to consider, that will let us see how mighty an advantage such a matter must have, to be thus operative and transforming upon the soul, that it shall be said hereupon truly to be born of God; to wit, first the greatness of the thing itself, and, secondly, the kindness of the design.

[1.] The greatness of the thing, that this Jesus should be the Christ, the Son of God. This Jesus was then lately seen upon the face of this earth, a man like other men. What is believed concerning him? Why, that he is the Christ, the Son of God. That deity did inhabit and dwell in the flesh of this man, here is God manifested in the flesh. How great a thing is this! The serious, vivid belief of it, cannot but affect wonderfully; even in an ordinary way it cannot but have a mighty aptitude to affect the soul deeply that so believes; for, as was said, to believe this with a divine faith, it is to believe it because God made me believe it, not only by his authority, upon which this faith relies, but by his power by which this faith is wrought, and then I consider the thing believed accordingly. This Jesus is the Christ; he that appears to other men but as an ordinary man, appears to me the Son of

God. The divine glory shines in him to the eye of my soul. He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. To believe this with such an heart-assuring faith and persuasion, is to believe the greatest thing that ever was heard of. That this Son of God should be a man, or that this man, lately seen with eyes in the world, and handled with hands, is the very Son of God, this tends to form the soul to veneration by the very greatness of the thing itself. And God, when he works this mighty work of regeneration upon the soul, he works by means, by apt and suitable means; means suitable to the work to be wrought, and suitable to the subject to be wrought upon. Now what can be so apt a means to work such a transforming work as this upon an intelligent subject (as the soul of man is,) as to possess it with the belief of such a thing: here I have sent my own Son among you, he that was the brightness of my own glory, and the express image of my own person; I have here wrapt him up in human flesh, and he is in the flesh, to live among you, and at length to die among you, like one of you, as an human creature. What work must this make in the soul of a man, when believed in such a way as you have heard? It disposeth to veneration of that deity inhabiting in human flesh, and so works somewhat naturally upon the soul of a man (as it is God's way, he doth apply himself to our natural faculties,) to enlighten the mind, to mollify, change, and subdue the will. These are natural powers in us; but these would do nothing to the pleasing of God, or saving us, if not wrought upon by a divine almighty power. Now God doth sublimate the natural principle by this means.

There is such a thing as natural religiousness, man having been born of God at first, and his soul the very divine offspring (whereupon God is said to be the father of our spirits,) he hath a natural impression of God upon him. But it governs not but where regeneration takes place; it is a principle laid asleep: but such a faith of this thing brought in upon the soul, revives the principle of a natural religiousness and veneration of God. You see how far the same notion once did work upon a mistake in that Acts xiv. 11, when Paul and Barnabas had wrought miracles upon the impotent man, and preached such admirable divine doctrine that ravished and astonished the souls of their hearers, they immediately cried out, "The

gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And Paul, because he was chief speaker, he is called Mercurius, and Barnabas was called Jupiter, two of the most famous deities. And they are intent upon the business of sacrificing to them as incarnate deities. And the apostles had no small difficulty to withhold them from worshiping, and offering solemn sacrifices to them. So mightily did this mistaken notion operate.

Now then, that which is the very truth of the thing comes to be believed in good earnest, as certain, concerning this person, this Jesus. Here is God come down in the likeness of a man, he that was in the form of God, found in fashion as a man, made in the likeness of man. Christians must be more stupid than those Pagans, if it affect not and make no motion stir in their hearts, so as to say and think, What a wonder is this! What a great thing! That God should have come down in the likeness of man, that we should have had an incarnate God dwelling in this wretched world among us! How amazing a thing is this! This, I say, tends to excite even in the very nature of the thing. And God, when he works, works by suitable means. In the nature of the thing there is a suitableness to excite that natural religion that's in the souls of men, which cannot be totally abolished, but is supprest. And such a thing as this hath a tendency to awaken it, when the divine Spirit sets in (as it will set in with truth, when it would not with falsehood) to restore in man that worshipping, adoring disposition towards God.

This is the first and most considerable thing in the work of regeneration, or the new creature; for what are men regenerated for? What makes the necessity of regeneration? It is that men were alienated from God, cut off from God, and therefore must have a nature put into them that would incline them unto God; they were alienated from the divine life. Regeneration is necessary for this, to incline the souls of men to live that life; to live upon God, and to God, and for God. So that when you consider what the work of regeneration is necessary for, you will think that whatsoever will serve that end, to wit, inclining men unto God, fitting them for his communion, and for a state of subordination and absolute devotedness to him, must be the principal aim of regeneration. It is to set the spirits of men right in their disposition and posture towards God, to whom they were strangers, and from whom they were gone off. And you see how the greatness of this thing

did very much impress the minds of those Pagans; they thought the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and now they are all for worshiping them. But besides the greatness of the thing, which is first to be considered in the matter believed, consider also,

[2.] The kindness of the design. This Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a deity, inhabiting under this flesh. What is this for? What is the design of it? A great thing, as such tends greatly to affect the heart of a man, if it be not stupefied into a stone, a rock, a clod. But when a great thing appears to be in conjunction with the kindest design towards them, this gives it a most important additional advantage, to affect the spirits of men beyond all that can be thought. What should be the meaning of it, that God should come down and put on man, and that this man should be God? Why, it was in order to his being Christ, the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man, as that name imports, so that this was with a particular reference to us, and with some very gracious intendment towards us. And therefore look upon this truth to be believed, this Jesus is the Christ, according to that kind and benign aspect which it hath upon us; and so it tends beyond all that can be thought to work with the greatest efficacy as means, though the thing would never be done without the Divine Spirit upon the spirits of men, to renew and regenerate them, so as that thereupon they should be said to be born of God.

God works upon the nature of man as he is a creature made up of reason and love, according to his natural state; and so he is according to what remainders there are in him of that nature which was first given, and which is still human nature; "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hosea xi. 4. If there be such a thing as love in the nature of man not quite abolished, not quite erased, which by such means as this, that Holy Spirit shall apply itself to a man's spirits to draw him by these cords, that love which he hath in him being taken hold of by the divine love appearing in this design, this gives it advantages to operate with the greatest efficacy that can be thought.

And do but see how this is cleared, by considering that passage I mentioned to you but now in the fourth chapter of this epistle and verse 15, looked upon in reference to what immediately goes before in verse 14, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Now look upon the foregoing words, and

you will see which way this works to open the soul unto God, so as that he comes to have an indwelling in that soul, and that soul an indwelling in him. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." I pray regard this, a mighty stress lies upon it, "We see and do testity, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and now it is subjoined, that "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, dwelleth in him, and he in God." Why? because this can be understood or believed under no other notion than as a Saviour to it, a Saviour to men; he came upon a saving design; this lets him into the soul, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and do you think that this person must not be regenerate? what can it be but that he must be born of God, when God is come into so near an union hereupon? And what lets him in and brings about this union? why, believing that he came as a Saviour into the world, we believe and testify that he came to do the office of a Saviour, and then God dwelleth in us, and we in God. There is that union hereby brought about between God and you, that it is impossible you should not be born of God. A new nature must hereupon come upon you, making you Godlike.

And this will most distinctly appear, if we consider what his coming as a Saviour implies: as his name signifies Jesus, Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour is anointed and authorized to this work of saving. When Christ was to come you know what was said by himself, and by such as gave testimony concerning him, that he "came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not walk in darkness." That same light that lets us see what he was, lets us see what we were too; the same light that we discover him by, we discover ourselves by. And what have we to discern of ourselves, but that we are a company of lost creatures, impure, guilty wretches, that have inhabited darkness and death? that are cast off from God, have lost all interest in him, and all inclination towards him? darkened creatures, in every faculty and power? under the dominion of sin, and in captivity to Satan, the evil one, the prince of the darkness of this world, and he that hath the power of that death that hath spread itself in all the gloominess and terrors of it over souls? The same light that reveals him, reveals this, and discovers our state, and thereupon shews that he as a Saviour hath to do such things as these.

First, That he is to take away our sins, the great make-bate between God and us. This to be believed, when we believe Jesus to be the Christ, that he came and was manifested to take away our sins. In him there being no sin, as in the third chapter of this epistle, verse 5. Oh, how will this transport a soul that hath once had but the convictive light (the thing before supposed) let in upon it to reveal Christ to it, and to reveal it to itself. Take away sin and I am a happy creature indeed, the only thing that ever hurt me, ever did me any harm. This Jesus was manifested for to take away sin; he is a Saviour for that, a Jesus for that, to save his people from their sins. And that is the reason of his name, Matt. i. 21. And,

Secondly, To vindicate us from under the power of the devil; for we were all led captive by him at his will. And this world did lie in the wicked one, that first apostate, that great enemy that hath trained man in to be accomplices with him in a rebellion against heaven; we are led captive by him at his will; and we followed naturally the course of this world, and "the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, 3. It is Christ's design as a Saviour to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. If a man be apprehensive of this, as when there is such light concerning Christ (there is such light concerning our state too) in this respect, he will be ready to cry out, Oh wretched man that I am! a vassal to the devil! he hath led me captive at his will, could do with me what he would, hath had his will upon me! Oh then to be rescued out of this captivity! Oh blessed Jesus! when Jesus is believed to be the Christ in order to this, it is not strange it should work such a work in the soul of a man. And

Thirdly, His business, as a Saviour, is to reconcile us to God, to bring about amity and friendship between God and us. When light is let into the soul to see its state, this is the most covetable of all things that can be thought of. There hath been a distance, and strangeness and enmity between God and me, he shall be the welcomest in all the world to me that shall make peace, that shall reconcile me to God, that shall procure me his favour, wherein stands my life. Jesus, as a Saviour, is to do this. He came to be a Saviour, a Jesus with this kind design, and to make this overture to the soul; Come, there is a warfare, and hath been of long continuance between God and you; I will be a reconciler, I will make peace. O blessed Jesus! "blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord," upon such an errand as this; for in his favour stands my very life. And,

Fourthly, As a Saviour, his design is to renew the divine image in the soul: Come, thou art a ruined creature, I will repair thy ruins: a degenerate creature, I will make thee a new creature, to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man; I come to new create thee, I come to put a new frame upon thee throughout. And,

Fifthly, He hereupon must have this for his design, to unite us to God, to bring about an union between God and us now that the reconciliation of him to us, and the transformation wrought in us make us capable of it; his design is to bring things to that pass with us, that our souls shall now run into union with God. Having the divine stamp put upon them, and a divine nature put into them, they cannot be held off any longer, they must unite with him, for they are become God-like; this is Christ's work as a Saviour, and he makes the soul apprehensive of it, and to apprehend this as the most desirable thing in all the world. As disconformity to God is the most heavy pressure upon the enlightened soul, which he hath in some measure made apprehensive. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is he that makes the soul weary of its deformity, and the ugliness that was upon it. Oh what an odious creature am I! what a pressure doth this lay upon me! that now I am become an hateful creature, who once had the divine image upon me, hereupon nothing could ensue but distance between God and me: Well saith he, I will put an end to all this, I will make up all this matter, I will put a new heart and new spirit into thee, I will write my law in thy heart, I will incline it to God, I will unite it to God; and in so doing, there shall be such a distance and such a strangeness between God and thee no longer. And,

Sixthly, It is by consequence hereupon his work (by doing all this) to perfect the nature of man within itself; gradually and inchoatively now; perfectly and consummately hereafter; he will absolutely perfect it at length. Is he restoring the divine image in us, making us who were darkness to be light in the Lord, making us, who had the image of hell upon us, to bear the image of God and heaven? Is he not then perfecting our nature by all this? making a new man? "Behold (saith he) I make all things new." That is the Mediator's great undertaking:

that is the undertaking of this Jesus, whom we believe to be the Christ. And hereupon,

Seventhly, He brings about (and that is part of his kind design) a continued communion and intercourse between God and us, so that we may live with God every day. Thou shalt not live a wandering creature, and a vagabond, upon the face of this earth, as thou hast done; thou hast now the privilege that thou mayest walk with God every day. Sin is taken away, thou art fetched from under the captivity of the devil, thou art reconciled to God, his image is renewed in thee, thou art re-united to him, thy nature is in a degree perfected, and shall be absolutely perfected; and thereupon thou art to have daily commerce with God in continual communion. This thy kind Saviour is doing for thee: believing this Jesus to be the Christ, thou believest all this, if you understand yourselves in what you profess to believe, and what lies before you as the object of your faith. And then in the last place,

Eighthly, All this in order to his introducing you into the presence of the divine glory at last, all doth but tend to one end, to make you participants of the "inheritance of the saints in light, and to present you holy and unblameable, without spot and faultiness, before the presence of the divine glory with exceeding joy," as it is in the latter end of the Epistle of Jude. In that conspicuous glory of his, or before his glorious face, where you are to have your abode statedly and everlastingly. This is his design. They believe Jesus to be the Christ, understandingly, as they are made to do so by the divine Spirit. They believe all this by consequence, this is their notion which they have concerning this Jesus that they believe to be the Christ; he is to do all this for such souls as mine, and upon my soul upon believing in him.

And then the soul, receiving him upon believing all this concerning him, being hereby opened to receive him, he hereby first acquires a right to all gracious communications from him; and then, secondly, hath the actual possession of those communications themselves; for all must be in and through Christ, that Spirit of Christ which is to do all is given upon his account and for his sake, upon being united to him; to wit, the soul is brought into union with him by that Spirit; and upon that union it diffuseth its influences through the soul, and possesses it for God, takes it for his temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of

God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16. And this cannot but infer then, that there should be such a regenerating work by which a foundation is laid for the truth of this assertion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." For all these things to be done by Christ are matter of promise, and all the promises are yea and amen, only in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. And what are these promises for? we are made partakers of these exceeding great and precious promises, or they are given to us, that by them we might be made partakers of the divine nature which is the very work of regeneration itself, the imparting that divine nature to us; all this promised good is in and by Christ; and believing him to be the Christ, we become intitled to all these promises, and they come of course (we having such a title) to be accomplished and made good.

And thus nothing is more manifest than that which to men might seem strange at first, that it should positively be said, "Whosoever believeth Jesus to be the Christ, is born of God;" it cannot but be so, if you do but observe the coincidency how these two things, believing Jesus to be the Christ, and being born of God, run into one another.

FINIS.

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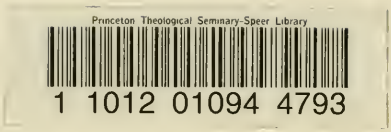
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